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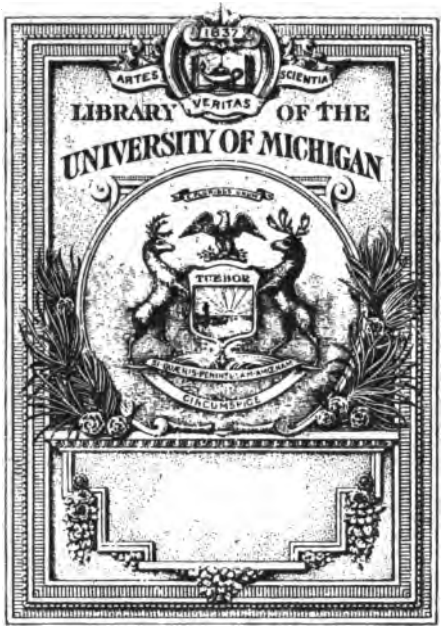
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# The Winning of Immortality

# The Winning of Immortality

BY

FREDERIC PALMER

AUTHOR OF "STUDIES IN THEOLOGIC DEFINITION," "THE DRAMA OF THE APOCALYPSE," ETC.

"Τὰ γὰρ ὀψώνια τῆς ἁμαρτίας θάνατος, τὸ δὲ χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ ζωὴ αἰώνιος ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν."

NEW YORK

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Second Edition

TO

G. H. P.

WHO HAS

INTERPRETED, ENDOWED, IRRADIATED,

ENNOBLED LIFE,

THIS STUDY OF LIFE

IS DEDICATED

375431

# Preface

IF an author has not said clearly what he wishes to say in the body of his book, he is not likely to put it into a word in the Preface; consequently many a Preface is useless. Yet he may be excused for standing at the door as showman and directing visitors what to look for. For what we look for we generally see, positively or negatively, that is, the thing or its absence; and either is better than gazing into vacancy. So let me say here at the end of my writing and the beginning of my readers' reading, what it is that I have aimed to do.

I find that many persons regard belief in another life as an amiable or at least respectable weakness, something which, like a throat-muffler, a sturdy soul ought to be able to do without, and be the better for its absence. This attitude of superiority rests largely on the

conviction that there is no reasonable evidence for a future existence, none sufficient for a man not already convinced, but that a belief in it must be the child of desire. I do not pause to argue that even such children, when found widely, may perhaps have a claim to legitimacy. But I think the conviction referred to is provincial, in that it seems to give ear only to evidence from the senses and the logical understanding. The negative results of such evidence need not alarm us. For we may listen to the anatomist declaring that he has discovered nowhere in the body the germ of immortality, with the same undisturbed smile with which we once heard an astronomer declare that he had swept the heavens with his telescope and found no God. But I believe evidence of a different kind exists, which is sufficient in amount and reasonableness to warrant a hope, a belief, a conviction — for with different persons the shading will be different — a basis at least for a hold on immortality which shall be as firm as one's belief in the reasonableness of the universe. Those who

find no indications of rationality in the world have no right to be in this instance illogically logical and claim that evidence of another life shall be discernible here; for on their own theory, the present life might be absurd without forbidding another life, certain and intelligible. But if it can be shown that there is as much reason for belief in a life after death as for the conviction that if there is such a life, two and two are four in it and not five, then there will be no more stones in this particular path than in other accustomed roads in which we walk with confidence.

I have aimed, therefore, first of all, to indicate that such evidence — so it seems to me — exists. And in order to show what kind of a belief the evidence warrants, I have endeavored to sketch the growth of the doctrine of a future life from its appearance in Hebrew history through the line of Christian development to the present time. In doing this we come upon the fact that the belief which was counted orthodox in the first Christian centuries was different in one notable respect from that gen-

erally counted orthodox to-day. For while we regard it proper and Christian to hold that immortality is necessarily inherent in humanity, this was then regarded as improper and un-Christian; the only truly Christian view being that immortality was a victorious prize to be won through fellowship with Christ. I cannot but think their orthodoxy wiser than ours. For I am sure one great deterrent to believing in a future life is, with many persons, the dread thought of the vast multitudes, the majority of mankind, according to some theologies, who, it is asserted, are condemned to conscious existence in wretchedness, in torture, forever. Such must be the result if perpetual existence is a necessity inherent in humanity. But if it is contingent, if the soul is not necessarily immortal but may become so, if the failure to attain immortality proceeds along ordinary non-arbitrary lines, and reaches a result which we see here imaged in the gradual elimination of decadent life, then the processes of the next world are redeemed from horror and made intelligible, almost verifiable. Immortality as a

necessity seems to me to have little to say for itself. As a goal to be attained, it is "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

I have tried to point out, for those who would be glad to believe but who will not, however much they may desire, without warrant, that there is, in the opinion of many, ground for being almost as sure of living hereafter as of living now. I have tried to move out of the way some difficulties which the subject has rolled upon believers, and some which believers have rolled upon the subject. For I must feel triumphantly confident that death is but the passing from one room to another, the dropping of an old suit of clothes, the promotion to a higher class in school, the door to a life logically sequent upon this, larger, richer.

FREDERIC PALMER.

CHRIST CHURCH RECTORY.
ANDOVER, MASS.

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# Prelude

*Kind years! How gently on thy head they lay*
*Ever anew some quiet nobleness!*
*As in the Spring the south wind's soft caress*
*Deepens the delicate greenery with its play,*
*While scarce we know it changes day by day;*
*So will the kind years ever love to press*
*Some joy within thy hand, will love to bless*
*Thy head with honors naught can take away.*

*Kind years! And when they lead thee to a place*
*Like Boxford, but even fairer, full of grace*
*And music and of sunlight and of trees,*
*Of songs of thrushes and of hum of bees,*
*Of glory sweeter far than all of these,*
*How natural then to thee will seem its face!*

M. T. P.

***

*O but to find my Love at home, after a time apart,*
*To hear her voice, and to see her smile, and to feel her hand in mine!*
*Life comes back then to its course again, and gladly sings my heart;*

# Prelude

*Then the sun may shine and the wind blow, or may neither blow nor shine.*

*O but to find my Love here after the long years past —*
*The sick years, the happy years — and to find they have left us alive!*
*Looking ahead at the first I said, "What if the first were the last!"*
*And now they are all behind us, the silvery Twenty-five.*

*O but to find my Love again, after the years are done,*
*And we both are safely dead and awake, with the new life stretching abroad!*
*For can She be She or can I be I, dear Lord, if we are not one?*
*Lest the sun grow dark and there be no Heaven, hold fast to Thy laws, O God!*

F. P.

***

*"Lord, I have seen Thy glory in the sky,*
*Such color as the angels bathe in, spread*
*Deep in the western heavens, orange-red.*
*Let me but paint, before the glory die,*
*To show my soul hath on Thy beauty fed;*
*For here are precious pigments fresh and wet."*
*But God replied, "Not yet."*

# Prelude

*"Lord, I have heard celestial harmonies,*
*Music the giant masters have not known.*
*It was the harpers round about Thy throne*
*Breathing their golden-throated symphonies.*
*To show I heard, let me some phrase intone,*
*That those who hear may nevermore forget."*
*But God replied, "Not yet."*

*"Lord, I have seen Thee face to face, and know*
*That it was Thou, and that Thou spak'st to me.*
*The shadows fall, and soon my life will be*
*Far spent. May I not speak before I go*
*Some word to show that I have been with Thee?*
*Ah, Lord, before my lips are sealed and set!"*
*But God replied, "Not yet."*

M. T. P.

# Development of Doctrine in the Bible

# I

# Development of Doctrine in the Bible

IN any of the newspapers of any large city there may be found a list of advertisements of fortune-tellers, astrologers, palmists, trance-mediums, clairvoyants. Some of them set forth their special attractions. One is the seventh son of a seventh son. Another tells the hiding-place of lost articles. Another reveals your future for twenty-five cents. Still another tells you what you wish to know, and guarantees satisfaction or the money refunded.[1] Such advertisements

[1] The following are taken from a Boston paper:

"Dr. ——. Tells past, present, and future, from the cradle to the grave. Sunday and daily."

"Mrs. ——, the only reliable and gifted trance-medium; consult her on all affairs of life; all in trouble call; satisfaction or no pay."

"Mme. ——, fortune-teller; ladies, 25c., gents, 50c.; one price only; 30 years experience."

"Miss ——, palmist and card-reader; past, present, and future revealed."

are a pitiable evidence of eagerness to look into the future, and an indication how large the number is of those who are ready to seize the smallest thread which promises to uplift the curtain. For such advertisements would not continue to appear if the advertisers did not make a living at their trade, and find that advertising paid. The curve of the future is determined by two factors, history multiplied by human nature; and one's ability to forecast the future will be in proportion to his knowledge of these two factors. Yet there has always been in the world a furtive belief that certain favored persons could read the future directly, without the calculation of rational data. Magic consists in the use of means which have in themselves no inherent power to produce the results desired. Most of the means used by the advertisers are magical, and have professedly but little to do with the principles on which the future is based. We sometimes hear it said that the future is entirely uncertain, so that no one can know anything about it. But this comes from confusing the principles of the

future with its events. The principles of all life, which will condition the future as they do the present, may be clearly known. Into what events these will crystallize is uncertain. But it is events, not principles, which the patrons of advertisements seek. And that they have so little knowledge of what may be known of the future, and so great a readiness to trust any clamorous guide however magical, is a testimony to an ignorance and an eagerness which are pitiful.

When we come to ask what are in reality the conditions of the future — what will the history of the world be, is there a life after death, what is the nature of that life, what will be the embodiment of the individual — we are apt to turn for an answer to the Bible. But the fact that many widely divergent answers seem given in the Bible makes it at least a doubtful standard of appeal. The more we study it, the plainer this lack of unity in its specific utterances becomes. It has not one voice, but many. The view of the future in the Book of Isaiah is widely different from that of Ecclesi-

astes, and both of them from that of the Book of the Revelation or the Epistles of St. Paul. This, indeed, when we consider the matter, is what we should expect. The view of the Bible prevalent at the beginning of the last century was that it is one book, containing one system of doctrine which underlies it from Genesis to Revelation. The view prevalent at the close of the century was that it is a selection from Jewish and Christian literature, covering about a thousand years. It necessarily contains, therefore, widely differing views of God and man's relation to Him, according to the different stages of Israel's development. But through it all there runs a unity, as the older view rightly maintained; and this unity comes from its upward reach, its God-ward look. The Bible has its value for us not because it transmits one self-consistent system of doctrine, for this is not the case, but because it records the spiritual education of that race which could draw a line to God straighter than that of any other. We are prepared, therefore, to find in the Bible different views of science,

history, ethics, theology. But underneath them all we hear one deep majestic chord forever more and more clearly sounding. Out from them rises the figure of the eternal God, becoming more and more clear and approachable, until we see the fullness of the Godhead bodily in its grace and truth in the face of Jesus Christ. The Jahveh of the book of Joshua is a different deity from the Lord God of the Second Isaiah, and the latter has not the power and glory which we see through Christ in His and our Heavenly Father. This development in the conception of God is the source of the Bible's hold upon men, and the assurance of the permanence of that hold. Other religions have exhibited each some conception of Deity which the age found lofty and satisfying. But because it contained no provision for expansion, because it was regarded as a complete and final statement concerning God, it was outgrown and became an idol. It is noteworthy that the deities of a lower civilization become the evil spirits and devils of the higher. Thus the glorious Greek Apollo be-

comes the Christian Apollyon[1]; the *Bug* whom the primitive Bulgarian worshipped and from whom he took his name, has become the "bugger" and "bugaboo" with whom to frighten children, and a name for the most obnoxious of insects. The bright *Devas* of the Hindu have become the *Devs* of the Persian. But though the tendency of theology in every age has been to hold its conception of God as final,[2] Jesus expressly warned his disciples against regarding His message to them as complete, but bade them expect a fresh and continual renewal of revelation. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth. He will show you things to come."[3]

[1] Rev. ix. 12.

[2] Cf. the splendid assurance exhibited in the Athanasian Creed: "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith. Which Faith, except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the Catholic Faith is this: etc. . . . This is the Catholic Faith, which, except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved."

[3] St. John xvi. 12, 13.

Not to recognize then the development of doctrine in the Bible and in Christianity is to ignore one of the most characteristic and precious features of the Gospel, and to do precisely what Jesus forbade in regard to establishing the religious standards of one age as final for all time.

In endeavoring then to learn of the condition of men after death, we cannot appeal to "what the Bible says," as if it were an utterance one and definite. We must either specify what part of its utterance on this subject we refer to, or else must be understood to mean that general tendency of thought which rises from dim beginnings in the Old Testament through clearer light in the New, which has received a wonderful development in our own day, but whose full revelation is not yet.

It may be objected that if we allow an utterance of the Bible to be not final in regard to the future, we must also hold that it is not necessarily final in other matters. And this is quite true. But the Bible nowhere claims

finality for itself.[1] Indeed the conception of a central standard or test for doctrines or opinions is foreign to the Bible, and is the growth of a later age. When dogmatic orthodoxy came to be regarded as essential, it became necessary to have an absolute objective standard as a test for opinion. For a long time, however, this standard was placed not in the Bible but in the Church. After the Protestant Reformation, however, the appeal to the Church was precluded, and it was felt that something else must be established to take the

[1] Unless Jude iii. is an instance. But while it is true that "ἅπαξ" may mean "once for all," it has also the meaning "once upon a time." It may be questioned whether the former meaning here would have been so strenuously insisted on, if the advocates of an extreme ecclesiasticism had not held fast to this much-overworked passage as the sole support of their view of an authoritative orthodox tradition. If it has the meaning "once for all," it is the sole instance in the New Testament where the Gospel is regarded as a body of doctrine given at a certain time as a *depositum*, complete, final, with revelation then closed. To those who consider it such, Benjamin Whichcote's dictum may well be commended: "No one institution depends upon one text of Scripture only; that institution which has but one text for it has never a one." (*Aphorisms*, 586.)

place of that central external authority which had hitherto been found in the Church. There could be nothing else but the Bible; and to it was gradually transferred that infallibility which, though it had not been yet officially asserted, was maintained for the utterances of the Church of Rome. This tendency, after a hundred years of development in Protestantism, found expression in the words of Chillingworth: "The Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants." An examination, however, of Chillingworth's work, "The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation," shows that it was intended not so much to establish the infallibility of the Bible as the non-infallibility of the Roman Catholic Church.

The idea that the inspiration of the Bible involves its infallibility is a part of that general tendency to substitute external and material relations with God for those which are personal and direct, which finds its roots in the desire to have religion made easy. For to perform any act of ritual, to undergo any ascetic pain, to yield obedience to any external authority,

is easier than to look straight towards God and to walk whither He is seen. To identify inspiration with infallibility is a part of that "rationalizing" tendency, which leads men to insist that God's revelation must have been made in a given way because that seems to them the proper way, instead of examining what in fact is the method of revelation.[1] Inspiration is the touch of the Spirit of God upon the spirit of man. Its presence is certified here, as elsewhere, by its results, its fruits. Those opinions which result in the long run in the fruits of the spirit — love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control[2] — are certified thereby as inspired by the Spirit of God. This is the test of inspiration given in the Bible itself. For in the only instance in which the word is used,[3]

[1] "In matters which concern the actions of God, the most dutiful way on our part is to search what God hath done, and with meekness to admire that, rather than to dispute what He in congruity of reason ought to do." — Richard Hooker: *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, III. xi. 21.

[2] Gal. v. 22. [3] 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

it is declared that because Scripture is "given by inspiration of God" (θεόπνευστος), therefore it is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." These qualities are thus held to be the evidential marks of inspiration. And the object of inspiration is practical rather than dogmatic: "That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." Inspiration then is regarded in the Bible as furnishing spiritual and practical guidance; the inspired Scriptures are an authority in religion; but the idea of inspiration as a guarantee of certitude or infallibility is absent.

This is now so generally recognized in regard to certain departments of the Bible that all that is needed is the application of the same principle to the other parts. No one considers it an infringement of the Bible's inspiration that it contains views of geography and cosmology now demonstrated to be incorrect.[1] The Book of Genesis gives an imagina-

[1] The Hebrews believed the earth to be a plain surrounded by water. Heaven, containing God's abode, was

tive description of the development of the world through a central personality; but the actual history was far different. The New Testament furnishes the basis of the Christian Church, though the present condition of its worship, doctrine, organization, is not pictured in it. So the doctrinal utterances of the Bible are, in the same way, not to be regarded as final, but as steps in the development of that intellectual apprehension of God whose broadening and deepening is the glory of Christianity.

But while inspiration can carry no guarantee of infallibility or even certitude,[1] it establishes

a solid arch overhead, with windows in it, through which the rain descended; while deep underground was Sheol, a pit, which was the residence of all the dead. — Cf. Article *Cosmogony*, Hastings' Bible Dictionary.

[1] Among the instances of inspired utterances which were never fulfilled in the manner predicted, are the following: 1 Thess. iv. 13–18 (where the assertion is that the event foretold will occur in the lifetime of the writer); the overthrow of Tyre, predicted in Ezek. xxvi–xxviii., xxx., and Amos i., ix., x. (Tyre was, it is true, conquered by Alexander two centuries and a half after the latest of these predictions; but even then it did not meet the fate which these expressions would demand, if they could be sup-

the utterances which are inspired as authoritative. To some persons these statements may appear contradictory. An authority which cannot be warranted as certain may seem to be no authority. Yet it is everywhere accepted as such. The view that authority necessarily involves certainty comes, in practical matters, from the association of military authority with physical compulsion, and, in religious matters, from too exclusive an identification of the domain of God's Spirit with truth to the neglect of life. But we recognize the uncertainty of

posed to refer to it, but continued to exist with varying fortunes for centuries). Jeremiah (ch. iii.–vi.) and Zephaniah had foretold the invasion of Judah by a mighty people from the north, and a destruction in which Philistia, Moab, and Ethiopia would share. That the prophecy was not regarded as fulfilled by the Babylonian invasion is shown by the fact that Ezekiel, after the Exile had begun, thinks it necessary to declare that its fulfillment is still in the future (cf. Ezek. xxxviii. 17. The interrogation in this verse is, with the LXX and the Vulgate, to be omitted). Judah was never destroyed in the manner contemplated by these prophets. Much of the language of the Prophet of the Return, while true and magnificent as poetry, was, if regarded as prediction, unjustified by the event. Cf. Isa. xli. 18, 19; xl. 4; lx. 6 ff.

authorities by comparing them, like adjectives, —"good," "better," and "best"; and the allowance of comparative and superlative does not excommunicate the positive. If I want an authority on Christian Science, I may turn to my friend, who has been changed by it from a nervous invalid to a person of stalwart activities, impervious to headaches and colds. He may, however, modestly suggest that Mrs. Eddy's book, "Science and Health," is a better authority. And so I buy it, as my friend's copy belongs to last year's edition, and is therefore now antiquated. But I have no sooner bought it than I decide that I want the best authority. So I write my difficulties and questions to Mrs. Eddy herself, for what authority as to a property can be better than that of the proprietor? Then when I receive her kindly, vague answer, I feel that I have the last word to be said in the matter. I have tried the different authorities. It is true, the authority regarded as the highest has been perhaps less illuminative, less convincing than the miraculous transformation I witnessed at first. But

this only convinces me the more that authorities are of many kinds and must be counted and weighed and cross-examined in every conceivable manner in order to make them fulfill their function as witnesses to the truth. Some have been so tested that their word can be accepted without question in all ordinary affairs. But where life or, more important still, the vision of God, hangs on the decision, then I can take no authority which does not come to me bearing God's own credentials. What those are, I shall decide according to my education and knowledge of God. If I know God already to some extent, and have faith in Him, I shall demand that His messenger accredit himself by the signs which St. Paul declared were the evidences of a Divine mission [1] — in the domain of opinion, by congruousness with truth already known; in action, by righteous efficiency; in personal character, by kindliness and spirituality. If I am timid or indolent in spiritual perception, I shall seek some one to do the work for me. I shall ask him to take the re-

[1] 2 Cor. vi. 4–11.

sponsibility of decision, and I will take his word for it. I shall probably suppose that in this way I am myself avoiding a decision. Of course I am not, for I am deciding that he is a proper person to decide. This is merely making one great decision in place of a number of small ones. And though it may be more convenient to wrap a number of small parcels together into a large bundle, it in no way diminishes their weight. The Roman Catholic, who decides that the Pope and the Church are infallible, or who, as he himself would probably say, disclaims decision in such matters but yields his private judgment and accepts their authority; or the Protestant, who decides that the Bible is infallible and identifies it in all its parts with the unerring Word of God; — each of these is as truly exercising private judgment in passing upon the credentials claimed to be those of God's representative, as if he were to decide upon the truth or the right in each individual case. It is often more convenient to have a trusted authority to refer to, the result is often more likely to be correct, than

if each were to follow out his individual course. But it is a process essentially the same in kind as the other, in that it involves a final decision. Yet the department in which the decision must be made is for the majority of persons easier and more trustworthy, though less communicative, educative, and certain. For to receive an opinion on authority is to receive it not because of its inherent truth, but because of the character of the one through whom it comes. The ordinary person is a much better judge of character than of abstract truth, and he will, therefore, be more likely to reach comfortable results in an unfamiliar domain by trusting a friend than by confidently and rashly exploring for himself. But comfort is not the only thing to be considered. And where a soul has once been mastered by the insistent craving for directness of relation to God; where one is compelled to cry out, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God! when shall I come and appear before God?" [1] then it is no longer possible to rest upon testimony which is ex-

[1] Ps. xlii. 2.

ternal only, for that utterance alone can now satisfy in which the soul hears the direct voice of God.

Authority then, the testimony of experienced and trusted persons, will always rightly be to a great degree the ground on which religion is based. But this can never be its ultimate ground, for that can only be found in the soul's recognition of God's voice. And while different authorities may carry differing degrees of assurance, no such thing as infallibility or an external guarantee of absolute certainty, is possible; for this would demand that the one who pronounced upon such infallibility should be himself infallible. The various attempts at perpetual motion, such as lifting oneself in a basket, reasoning in a circle, or establishing infallibility by fallibility, must all have the same disappointing result.

Does inspiration then furnish no ground of assurance? Certainly it does. For inspiration is the touch of the Spirit of God upon the spirit of man. His Spirit is the spirit of truth; and the soul which has been seized and filled

with the spirit of truth has the certainty of union with God. For an eager insistence of search for truth and that only, is the condition and the guarantee of its attainment. This was the belief of Christ and His promise to His disciples. "When He, the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth." [1] "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." [2] Not indeed that every opinion he may then adopt will be guaranteed as correct; not even that he is assured correctness of opinion before he dies. The individual opinion and the individual life are stages too small for the development of the Divine plan. For truth is not a thing which can ever be fully possessed, like a house, but, like holiness, it unfolds the more the nearer it is approached. For this reason, on account of its nature, the possession of the spirit of truth is the only guarantee possible of its attainment. For any form or doctrinal statement which embodies the truth at any given time is necessarily but partial, and may become unintelligible or out-

[1] St. John xvi. 13. [2] St. John vii. 17.

worn; but the spirit of truth abides and is sure of aim.

The inspiration of the Bible then is that quality in it which kindles men's minds and souls to seek after God, and which gives thus an assurance, not that the particular historical or doctrinal statements the Bible contains are accurate or final, but that, so far as this inspiration has its normal effect, men will be brought through it to the truth and to God.

"Inspiration is often regarded wholly as passive, rather than as active also; as a power exerted upon the prophet, rather than exerted by him; as a guarantee of the authenticity of his message, rather than as the means by which his message becomes efficient. Undoubtedly this passive side exists; but the conception of inspiration is incomplete without the active side. And, indeed, it is the active side which establishes the existence of the passive. The only way we can know that a man is inspired is by seeing that he is inspiring. Does he guide men's thought aright? Does he enkindle their loftiest feeling? Does he confirm

their weakness of will? Does he bring them into the presence of God, so that through him the potencies of that presence are exerted upon them? Then he is inspiring; and because inspiring, it must be that he is inspired; for no man can do these miracles except God be with him. The important thing for us to know concerning any messenger is whether or not he is sent from God. This cannot be known directly, but only by signs. The signs of divine authorization are that through him who has it the blind are made to receive their sight, the lame to walk, the lepers to be cleansed, the deaf to hear, the dead to be raised, and the poor to have the gospel preached to them.[1] After a prophet's credentials are established, we shall say of him, 'He is inspired; therefore he will be inspiring.' But in order to establish his credentials we must be able to say, 'He is inspiring; therefore he is inspired.' . . . Among men who are capable of receiving and reflecting God, the degree of such capacity must vary. While one sees but few aspects of

[1] St. Matt. xi. 5.

eternal truth and those mainly adapted to his own time, another's vision is comprehensive, seeing the truth on many sides and in its naked, eternal form. It has been a great good fortune to the Christian Church that the canon of the Scriptures has recognized this, and that we consequently have in the Bible books inspiring and inspired, which yet vary in their degrees of inspiration; books differing as widely as Ecclesiastes and the Gospel of St. John. The lower degree of inspiration, local and temporary as it may be, may yet claim to be the instrument of revelation. For inspiration is not infallibility. God the inspiring Spirit can dwell with partial knowledge, just as God the sanctifying Spirit can dwell with partial holiness; for if he could not so dwell with men, He could not dwell with them at all." [1]

[1] Frederic Palmer: "Studies in Theologic Definition," pp. 102–105.

# The Doctrine of a Future State in the Old Testament

## II

# The Doctrine of a Future State in the Old Testament

WE have paused at the outset to consider development of doctrine in the Scriptures. For while the recognition of such development is important in regard to all departments of the Bible, it is of pre-eminent importance in regard to the state of men after death and the end of all things. It is through lack of recognizing this, and consequently assigning a finality, an absoluteness, to individual passages of Scripture which they cannot have, that the Bible has been made to minister to the most absurd vagaries of human fancy, and to serve as a charter for the foundation of numberless petty sects.[1] It would be

[1] Referring to St. John xiii. 3–6, the Dunkers practise foot-washing in connection with the Lord's Supper. Referring to St. James v. 14, they anoint with oil for the healing of the sick, and many of them will adopt no other means.

as unwarranted to assume from St. Paul's words to the Thessalonians [1] that during our lifetime the world will come to an end and Jesus will appear seated on the clouds of heaven, as to declare from the frank agnosticism of the Book of Ecclesiastes [2] that the immortality of man is denied altogether by the Bible. We must hold that God's revelation concerning the destiny of man consists in the full sweep of inspired truth upon this subject. We welcome with honor its earliest germs. We look forward to a completeness not yet attained.

In considering then the process of its development we shall not feel surprised to find its early stages rudimentary, nor shall we feel obliged to ascribe final authority to any one of them, nor to stop and explain why it has not final authority. Since it is Christian theology whose development in this respect we are tracing, we shall not attempt to consider the rise of the idea of immortality throughout the world at large, but shall touch on those lines

[1] 1 Thess. iv. 6, 17.
[2] Eccles. ii. 16; iii. 19, 20.

only which have converged to form the modern Christian doctrine.

The early belief among the Hebrews as to the future was connected with that worship of ancestors which was almost universal in the primitive world. The dead were not regarded as extinct, but as in some sense living, and as sharing in the fortunes of their posterity, — with power to aid or to harm. To propitiate them, sacrifices were offered, which helped to preserve the vitality of the departed and sustain their honor in the other world, and also to establish a covenant with them; for in every sacrifice the worshipper and the worshipped were regarded as taking part in a meal in common, which was, then as now, the closest bond of friendship known. Images ("teraphim"), representing the ancestors,[1] were kept in the

[1] Among those holding this view are Schwally ("Das Leben nach dem Tode," 35), Stade ("Geschichte des Volks Israel," I. 467), Budde (on Judg. xvii. 5), Holzinger (on Gen. xxxi. 17), Nowack (on Hos. iii, 4). That the teraphim represented ancestors is denied by Frey ("Tod, Seelenglaube und Seelenkult im alten Israel," 102–112), Kautsch (Hastings' Dict. of the Bible, Art. *The Religion of Israel*).

house,[1] and were consulted for oracles.[2] The religion of Jahveh, however, set itself against this primitive ancestor-worship[3]; but many traces of the earlier heathenism remained, and were even in some cases incorporated into the national religion,[4] just as some of the pagan deities were baptized into saints by the Roman Catholic Church.[5]

[1] Gen. xxxi. 19, 30–36; 1 Sam. xix. 13.

[2] Ezek. xxi. 21; Hos. iii. 4.

[3] 2 Kings xxiii. 24; Ezek. xxiv. 17.

[4] The teraphim came to be regarded as images of Jahveh. Cf. Judg. xvii. 5. The wearing of sackcloth, as a sign of inferiority in presence of a superior; the making of incisions in the flesh for blood-brotherhood with the dead, as with the living; cutting the hair of the head or beard, as an offering to the dead from the bodies of the living — these practices were forbidden. Cf. Lev. xix. 27, 28; Deut. xiv. 1. But the attempt to abolish them was not successful, and they remained embedded in the religious customs of the people. Cf. Mic. i. 16; Jer. xli. 5. The last of the practices mentioned survives in a usage of the present day. The covering of the head by the mourner (cf. 2 Sam. xv. 30) was probably a substitute originally for cutting off the hair. As expressing reverence in a worshipper it was used therefore in approaching God (1 Kings xix. 13); and such now is the universal custom of the Jewish synagogues.

[5] "The giant-slaying Athena of Seleuceia is dimly recognizable beneath the figure of St. Thekla of Seleuceia; the

# Future State in Old Testament

Two different views of the underworld are traceable in the Old Testament; the one the result of the primitive ancestor-worship, and the other resulting probably from that monotheism according to which Jahveh was regarded as the source of all life. According to the earlier view the departed preserve their identity. They have consciousness and memory; they keep their appearance, their customs, and even their dress. The prophet has his characteristic mantle,[1] kings have their crowns and thrones,[2] and different nationalities are recognized, presumably by their differences of dress and speech. The dead are regarded sometimes as having no knowledge of what has taken place in their world since their departure,[3] sometimes as being acquainted with the affairs of their descendants,[4] sometimes as possessing knowl-

old Virgin Artemis of the Lakes became the Virgin Mother of the Lakes, whose shrine amid a purely Turkish population is still an object of pilgrimage to the scattered Christians of southern Asia Minor; the god of Colossae was represented as Michael." — Prof. W. M. RAMSAY, "The Church in the Roman Empire," p. 466.

[1] 1 Sam. xxviii. 14.
[2] Isa. xiv. 9–12, 18.
[3] Job xiv. 21.
[4] Jer. xxxi. 15.

edge of the future.[1] But having recourse to the dead in order to peer into the future is sternly forbidden[2]; for even in that early day the difference was clearly perceived between knowledge of the future which is spiritual and that which is spiritistic. Family relationship continues unbroken, and entering the other world is going to be with one's fathers.[3]

All the dead are in one place, Sheol. This is situated far below the surface of the ground, near the foundations of the earth.[4] It is a huge chamber, containing smaller chambers within it,[5] and fastened securely with bars.[6] Being underground, it is of course, "the land of darkness," [7] "the pit" [8]; it is a place of dust [9] and disorder.[10] Death is universal; but as

[1] 1 Sam. xxviii. 16–20.

[2] Lev. xx. 6. In necromancy the diviner consulted his "familiar spirit" or Ob (אוֹב). This word is probably the root of the names still used by negroes in Africa and America for black magic, and those who practise it — "Obeah," "Obi-man."

[3] Ps. xlix. 19; 1 Kings ii. 10.

[4] Ezek. xxvi. 20; Ps. lxiii. 9. [5] Prov. vii. 27.

[6] Job xvii. 16. [7] Job x. 21. [8] Isa. xiv. 15, 19.

[9] Dan. xii. 2. [10] Job x. 22.

Jahveh was the God of Hebrews only, Sheol was outside of his dominion, and moral distinctions, therefore, had no place there.[1] It was the dwelling of great and small, good and bad alike.[2] Sheol had no exit; for the one who entered there was no return.[3]

The other view of the underworld was that it is so completely the land of silence,[4] and of forgetfulness,[5] that it is synonymous with destruction.[6] That which makes man a living soul is the spirit of God. This was given at the creation: "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul."[7] This impersonal spirit of life, man shares in common with the animals; to all alike it is given at birth, and when it is taken away, all alike turn to dust.[8] There is one and the same destiny for animals and for man. "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts, even one thing befalleth

[1] Ps. lxxxviii. 5; Isa. xxxviii. 18. [2] Job iii. 13–20.
[3] Job x. 21; xvi. 22. [4] Ps. cxv. 17.
[5] Ps. lxxxviii. 12. [6] Job xxvi. 6; Prov. xxvii. 20.
[7] Gen. ii. 7. [8] Ps. civ. 28, 29.

them. As the one dieth, so dieth the other. Yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast, for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again." [1] This is not merely the expression of an individual pessimism. It is uttered by different voices and with no reference to a belief in the dominance of a power of evil. "His breath goeth forth; he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." [2] "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. . . . But man dieth and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fail from the sea, and the river decayeth and drieth up, so man lieth down and riseth not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake nor be roused out of their sleep." [3]

This is the argument of modern materialism, which denies that the soul is immortal because it is always conditioned, so far as is seen, upon

[1] Eccles. iii. 19, 20. [2] Ps. cxlvi. 4. [3] Job xiv. 7–12.

physical life, and therefore there is no reason to suppose that it survives physical death. There is, however, no indication that in Israel this view was the outgrowth of materialism, either scientific or practical. It seems, in fact, to have been rather the result of a deeper religiousness. The conviction that man's life, that is, his spirit, was not a mere natural possession, his wholly and by right, but was his only as given by God, while it led by necessary logic to the conclusion that when this spirit was taken away there was no life left, also magnified the power of God. For it made life wholly dependent on connection with Him. Apart from Him — and the souls in Sheol were, in the primitive belief, apart from Him — there was no life. For life after death as a natural endowment, inherent in man by creation, the religion of Jahveh could find no place.[1]

[1] I cannot but think it is treating these passages superficially to regard them, as Dr. S. D. F. Salmond does in his very able work, "The Christian Doctrine of Immortality," as exceptional and non-significant. "They reflect moods of feeling, sinkings, and fluctuations of hope, which may

It was possibly for this reason that the Hebrews passed through their sojourn in Egypt

come at times on any mind in the dark and painful things of life. Or they express what death means when for the moment it is looked at simply from the side of nature, as the removal of the individual from the engagements, possessions, and activities of the familiar earthly scene" (p. 166). Whatever may be the ground of these passages, they are too numerous to be regarded as merely individual and sporadic. Such a view leaves also out of account the permanence of this type of thought in the national mind, and its adoption as a theological platform by the party of the opposition — that of the Sadducees — in the second century before the Christian era.

Prof. R. H. Charles traces a development similar to the above in the Greek view of Hades. Traces of the earlier thought are to be found in Homer, Odyss., x. and xi. "These passages attest belated survivals of Ancestor Worship. In these books the poet attributes the restoration of the consciousness of the Shades to their enjoyment of the blood of the slaughtered animals; but this is a pure misapprehension of the poet, who lived in an age that had forgotten the original significance of these rites." The later, "the normal and all but universal view of the soul in Homer," is that "after entrance into Hades, the soul loses consciousness and thought (Iliad, xxiii. 103, 104); it knows naught of the upper world; it cannot return thither (Iliad, xxiii. 75, 76); it cannot exert any influence on the living; it is as incapable of anguish as of affection." In Hesiod the two views have been adjusted to each other. "According to his 'Works and Days' (109–201) the men of the golden age became after death *δαίμονες ἐπιχθόνιοι*, watchers

unaffected in its higher life by one of the chief tenets of the Egyptian religion. The doctrine of the life of the soul after death was held as tenaciously, as prominently, and as pictorially in ancient Egypt as in Mediæval Europe. On monuments and tombs, in the *Book of the Dead* — that Sacred Book of the Nile Valley — and in other religious literature [1] we see — and the

over mankind in a good sense, and endowed with large powers. Similarly men of the silver age became δαίμονες ὑποχθόνιοι (not in Hades). Men of the bronze age (namely, of Hesiod's own time) became phantoms (εἴδωλα) in Hades. Now these views regarding the two earlier ages are not inventions of Hesiod, but survivals in the outlying Bœotia of a worship of souls which had existed long anterior to Homer; and that such views prevailed with regard to earlier generations and not to the later is due to the fact that in Hesiod's age the Homeric doctrine had become supreme." The cause of this development in Greece was, however, different from that in Israel. It was owing in part to "the separation of the Ionic Greeks from the land of their forefathers, where were the ancestral graves — the temples of the dead. A further cause was the adoption of the custom of burning the dead. By this means the soul was confined at once and forever to Hades." — "A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life," pp. 138–140.

[1] Among which were Hymns, Tales, the *Book of Knowing what is in the Tuat* or the *Book of Being in the Underworld*, the *Book of the Opening of the Mouth*, the *Lamenta-*

Israelites in Egypt saw these very things — the condition of the soul after death described in all its vicissitudes. The dead stand before the throne of Osiris, and the heart of each is weighed in the divine scales. The righteous then pass through many further disciplinary trials; they must withstand the assaults of crocodile and serpent, and of evil spirits. They enjoy a life with occupations and pleasures like those of earth; but through this their powers become so enlarged that the whole universe is open to them. They rise above the human limits of existence, and exist in many forms. They dwell in the light of the glory of Osiris.[1] But the condemned are banished to everlasting darkness, to beds and nets of torments, to the block of execution, to a second death.

Since the thought of a future life bore so

*tions of Isis and Nephthys*, the *Book of the Breaths of Life*, the *Precepts of Ptahhotep*.

[1] "To be with the Deity and to be like him, is, even in this, the oldest development of the doctrine of immortality, what constitutes salvation." — C. P. Tiele: "History of the Egyptian Religion," p. 29.

prominent a place in the high civilization by which the Israelites were surrounded, why did not they adopt it, or at least come under its influence? There is little indication that they borrowed any of the ideas or customs of Egypt or were directly influenced by them.[1] No satisfactory explanation of this problem has been found. Perhaps the Hebrew was even then as solitary among the nations, as tenacious of his

[1] Renouf calls attention to the remarkable fact that they did not even take with them the Egyptian length of year. "I have looked through a number of works professing to discover Egyptian influences in Hebrew institutions, but have not even found anything worth controverting. Purely external resemblances may, no doubt, be discovered in abundance, but evidence of the transmission of ideas will be sought in vain." — "Lectures on the Religion of Ancient Egypt," The Hibbert Lectures, 1879, pp. 244, 245.

Other scholars, however, trace an apparent connection between the ark of Moses and the ship on which the Egyptians carried the image of a god from place to place; a probable acquaintance on Moses' part with at least some of the most striking features of Egyptian religious observance; and a relation between the second pentad of the Decalogue and the confession of the soul of the dead before Osiris. (Cf. "The Religion of Moses," John P. Peters; *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1902, p. 125.) The likeness is also striking between the plan of the Egyptian temple and that of the Hebrew tabernacle and temples.

own ideas and customs, as he is to-day, and the fact that immortality bore a prominent place in the religion of his oppressors may have led him to reject it the more determinedly. We have already seen that he did have a belief in the soul's survival of death, though as compared to that of Egypt it was meagre and vague. Perhaps the Egyptian belief seemed to the worshipper of Jahveh to regard immortality too much as a natural endowment; perhaps it came into conflict with his view of life as given and taken by the hand of God. Perhaps it would have been too strongly allied with that worship of ancestors out of which the mind of the Hebrew was emerging. Perhaps at the time of his acquaintance with it it was too little moral, contemplating too much a mere prolongation of the present life, for him to feel in it any advantage over that belief in Sheol which the majority of the Hebrews themselves held, but which Mosaism, in the interest of the worship of Jahveh, was endeavoring to destroy. At all events, the Hebrew passed through Egypt untouched by

its doctrine of a future life, and so his religion in this respect escaped at least that degradation which, in the early days of Christianity, made the Egyptian religion, with its myriads of deities — beasts, birds, reptiles, "garlic and onions and thorns" — an object of derision to both Christians and pagans.[1]

These two views in regard to the world after death continued to exist in Israel, conflicting yet concurrent. The higher was unable to drive out completely the lower. For although existence after death may seem higher than annihilation, in this case it was the more materialistic, the less profound conception. For the quality of existence in Sheol made it unspiritual and far below that of this life; and the fact that it was inherent in humanity made it void of moral character and therefore independent of God. No true or satisfying belief in immortality could arise until the inheritance of ancestor-worship was shattered.

[1] Cf. "The Apology of Aristides," in J. A. Robinson's *Texts and Studies*, Vol. I., No. 1, pp. 45, 46. Also Juvenal, Sat. XV, 1.

But a complete negation, even though it is a step upward, can never drive out a positive belief, however erroneous. The negative belief failed because the national thought, on which it was based, had not yet a proper conception of the individual. The Hebrew mind, like most others of antiquity, dwelt chiefly on the corporate aspects of humanity. The family, the tribe, the nation, organized life in some of its forms, these filled its vision, and left it little sense of the value of the individual.

This view of the relation of the individual to the community was probably a survival from the time when primitive tribes led a nomadic life, when united action was essential to safety, and independent action by an individual was dangerous not only to him but to the whole tribe. Responsibility was corporate; the sins of the fathers were visited on the children to the third and fourth generation,[1] those of the individual on his community or tribe.[2] Institutions were not for the service of individuals,

[1] Exod. xx. 5. [2] Ibid. xii. 29.

but individuals were for the service of institutions. Individual life was not distinct from social life; the lot of the individual was not only bound up with, but was sunk in, that of the nation. This idea of all parts of the nation forming a whole, extended even to its territory, which was regarded as sharing the moral character of its inhabitants,[1] and as needing and having, like them, a Sabbatical rest.[2] The merging of one's private interests in the fortunes of the nation brought comfort and hope to the pious Israelite when in despondency. For it was of little importance that he himself was overwhelmed, so long as he could take refuge in the changelessness of God, and find in this the assurance of the nation's stability and prosperity in the future.[3] This corporate view of humanity must be borne in mind also in considering the Canaanitish wars, the Imprecatory Psalms, and the arguments of St. Paul as to the rejection of Israel and the adoption of the Gentiles. It was the form of thought

[1] Lev. xviii. 25. [2] Ibid. xxv. 4.
[3] Ps. cii. 26–28.

under which almost the whole mind of antiquity regarded man.[1]

Near the end of the seventh century, when the kingdom of Judea was tottering to its

[1] Instances, however, in the Old Testament of the recognition of individualism before the sixth century, are the following: Gen. xviii. 25; Exod. xxxii. 33; Num. xvi. 22; Deut. xxiv. 16; 2 Sam. xxiv. 17; 2 Kings xiv. 6; Isa. iii. 10, 11; xxxiii. 15. But these passages embody the insight of the few. The master-mind, which should take the rare thought and make it common, did not appear till the close of the seventh century.

For an instance of the influence of the idea of corporate relationship upon modern theology, cf. the Westminster Shorter Catechism, Ans. 16: "The covenant being made with Adam not only for himself but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression." Also the same idea expanded: "In the first treaty between God and man, Adam was considered not as a single person but as the representative of a nation, and contracted for all his descendants by ordinary generation. His person was the fountain of theirs, and his will the representative of theirs. From hence his vast progeny became a party in the covenant, and had a title to the benefits contained in it upon his obedience, and was liable to the curse upon his violation of it. As the whole race of mankind was virtually in Adam's loins, so it was presumed to give virtual consent to what he did eat. When he broke, all suffered shipwreck that were contained in him as their natural original." Cruden's Concordance, 14th ed., Art. "Sin."

fall, the recklessness of the time and its despair gave birth, as it always does, to fatalism, which found expression in the proverb, "The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge." It was the natural outcome of dwelling wholly on the solidarity of ancestors and descendants. It was the denial of moral responsibility, on the part of the generation existing, for the decay and impending overthrow of the nation. But Jeremiah boldly goes so far as to question the premises on which the conclusion in the popular thought is based. "In those days," he declares, "they shall say no more, 'The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' But every one shall die for his own iniquity; every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge." [1] It was the explicit declaration of the profound principle which was to change the world's thought, and to form in time the characteristic difference between the ancient world and the modern. It was caught up at once by a young

[1] Jer. xxxi. 29, 30.

priest who was carried with other captives from Judea to Babylonia. Ezekiel took the message which he had heard from the older prophet, and developed it on many sides. The righteousness of the holiest of men, Noah, Daniel, or Job, should not avail to save the community, but should save only themselves.[1] The son is not to bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father that of the son; the soul that sinneth, *it* shall die.[2] Moral status is determined by actual moral agency, and may therefore be changed by a man's own inward act from evil to good and from good to evil.[3] Ezekiel saw in this doctrine of the individual the solution of the terrible problem which lay in the nation's captivity. For had not God promised victory and prosperity to His people? Yet they were captive in a strange land, with their holy city — more than that, their Temple, the dwelling-place of Jahveh — burned to the ground, and they shut off not only from God's promises, but from all relation with Him. For

[1] Ezek. xiv. 12–22. [2] Ibid. xviii.
[3] Ibid. xxxiii. 12–21.

the idea of the divine omnipresence had not yet risen upon the world. Each nation had its own God, who was confined to its territory. Jahveh, their God, had been left behind at Jerusalem, apparently disgraced by defeat, like any mere Baal of the nations. It was this problem, involving, as it seemed, the overthrow of religion, which formed the bitterest part of the pious exile's lot. So far as outward conditions were concerned, their captivity was in general not hard. The Books of Daniel and Tobit show that many of the people settled down into comfortable homes and even attained positions of honor, and the great Epic of the Exile (Isa. xl. to lxvi.) pictures them as culpably content with the situation and careless of the duty of returning to their own land.[1] But those of loftier soul cared little for comfortableness while the great puzzle of God's desertion of His people was pressing upon them. The right hand should forget its cunning and the tongue cleave to the mouth, if Jerusalem should fail to be the chief care.[2]

[1] Isa. xliii. 8; liii. 1. [2] Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6.

*They* were God's people; other nations had no relation with Him. Yet their holy and beautiful house was burned, and God was keeping silence. Why, and how long?[1]

It was then for the first time that the thought dawned on the devout and troubled mind of the exile that wherever he might be, he was not shut off from God, since the intercourse with Him which had been hitherto made real and expressed through ritual worship, must be possible through the longings and prayers of the soul. Now that the service of the Temple was no longer possible, God would surely take the will for the deed and accept the service of the heart. "Let my prayer," he exclaims, "be set forth before Thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."[2] This discovery carried with it the corollary that God must listen not only to the collective prayer of the nation, but to the voice of every soul that sought Him. And at once the revelation of such direct personal relation-

[1] Isa. lxiii. 18, 19; lxiv. 9–12.
[2] Ps. cxli. 2.

ship flashed its illuminative light upon the great problem, and it was solved. Even if God's promises had failed, interpreted nationally, they still held good, interpreted individually. Religion had henceforth a new basis, and God became a wealth for the soul which it could carry with it always and everywhere, which the world could not give nor take away.

The Exile taught three great lessons. The first was the folly of idolatry. The nation went to Babylon inclined to dally with the deities of their neighbors,[1] and to make images of their own God.[2] But preaching was for once effective.[3] The scorn poured out by their preachers, together with the sight of the moral degradation bred by idolatry, sent them away from Babylon a nation filled with hatred of idolatry. No Jew ever looked upon an idol again, except as an abomination. The second lesson was the inwardness of the service of God, with prayer as the spiritual equivalent of ritual worship. And the third was the transference

[1] Ezek. viii. [2] Deut. iv. 12, 15–19, 23. [3] Isa. xliv. 9–21.

of the religious unit from the nation to the individual.

The problem of existence after death is the problem of personality. There could therefore be no real light upon it as long as the thought of the world gave a defective place to the individual. It was thus only after the Exile that that belief in immortality became possible, which, in the second century before Christ, came to be common among the Jews. We catch but indistinct glimpses of it in the Old Testament; we find it taken for granted in the New.[1]

[1] The chief passages in the Old Testament which indicate a presentiment of immortality are the following: Ps. xvi. 9 f.; xvii. 15; xlix. 14, 15; lxxiii. 24. The passages sometimes referred to in Job (xix. 25–27; xiv. 13–15) are, to say the least, uncertain. It is plain that if there had been any clear perception of the doctrine of immortality, the Book of Job would never have been written, for its problem would have been answered as soon as asked.

Passages in the Apocrypha in which immortality is recognized are the following: Wisd. i. 13 f.; ii.; iii.; iv. 16; v. 1, 5, 15, 16; xv. 3; 2 Esdr. vi. 9; vii. 26–34; viii. 1–3; ix. 9–14; 2 Macc. vii. 9, 11, 14, 29, 36.

# The Doctrine of a Future State in the New Testament

III

# The Doctrine of a Future State in the New Testament

EZEKIEL'S doctrine of the individual laid the foundation for a belief in personal immortality, but it did not carry with it in itself such a belief. If it had, it would have been saved from the disastrous consequences which followed it. He was interested in the significance of the individual mainly on the side of responsibility. It was the problem of retribution with which he was concerned, and his service to the solution lay in the declaration that retribution had not a corporate but an individual basis. It is the soul that sinneth that shall die; but "when the wicked man turneth away from the wickedness that he hath committed and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." [1] Punishment and reward come

[1] Ezek. xviii. 27.

in each case direct to the agent. But since the condition beyond death was but vague, at best something between existence and non-existence, the outlook was limited to this life, and retribution was regarded as completing itself before death. Worldly prosperity then came to be looked upon more than ever as the mark of Divine approval, and misfortune as the punishment for some sin, known or unknown.[1] The way was therefore prepared by this doctrine for that worship of success baptized as the service of God, which Jesus denounced,[2] and which has formed the common basis for the Pharisaism and the Sadduceeism of every age.

Ezekiel's note of individual worth, once

[1] It is, for example, the bitterest part of the pain of Job that he cannot understand why he should suffer, since he has done nothing to deserve it. His friends insist that he must have committed some sin even if he is unaware of it. But he sturdily maintains his innocence to the end, and will not purchase peace of mind by hypocrisy. Cf. viii. 6; xiii. 15; xvi. 16, 17; xxvii. 4–9. Individual suffering may also be caused by some national sin, of which the sufferer may be unaware. Cf. 2 Macc. vii. 18, 32, 38.

[2] St. Luke xiii. 1–6.

grounded, increased in volume and importance. The utterances of Jesus have it almost universally as their centre. While He no doubt contemplated the embodiment of His movement in a society, the vast majority of His words aim at the individual. What He said of the sabbath must be taken to represent His view of the relation of every institution to the individual — that the institution is for the man, not the man for the institution.[1] Over and over again, God's care for each man is lovingly emphasized. His beneficent watchfulness extends to every sparrow, every flower; much more, then, to every person, nay, even to every hair of his head.[2] Historic Christianity has made much of organizations; Christ, though He recognized them, attached but little weight to them. For they are the body of religion; and though He acknowledged the use and the claims of the body, He was chiefly concerned with the soul. When that was recognized as of first importance, the needs of

[1] St. Mark ii. 27.
[2] St. Matt. x. 29–32; vi. 30.

the body would be met.[1] This view of the relation of body and soul is as true of the relation of corporate life and that of the individual.

But the construction and management of machinery is always easier than the development of personality. This fact, combined with the practical needs of the time, led to the subordination for fifteen hundred years of the interests of the individual to institutionalism. The Renaissance was the assertion of the rights of humanism as against dogmatism, of the individual as against institutions. Its characteristic note was "I will." Luther emphasized the particularity of the Bible's promises, and called attention to its pronouns. It is "*my* God" that is set forth there. The promise is not "God will save men," but "I will save thee." The modern world accepted on a large scale the discarded astronomical belief of the old world, and held that the universe centred in man.

The retribution taught by Christ differed in three respects from that of the popular doc-

[1] St. Matt. vi. 25.

trine. In the first place, He restored the truth lying in the idea of the solidarity of man. Though salvation has reference to the individual, it is not a matter to be found by him in isolation, apart from his fellow-men, but is to be gained through his relations with them in the paths of ordinary life. The supreme test of the Divine judgment is not profession of service to God, not even the consciousness of such service, but simply a disinterested devotion to the world's needs.[1] In the second place, Christ taught that retribution was primarily not material but spiritual. The idea that food, drink, and clothing were matters of importance and that the Divine reward was to be looked for in these, was a heathen one.[2] God's blessings were humility, the sense of sin, the longing for righteousness, kindliness, sincerity, serviceableness, martyrdom.[3] In the third place, He multiplied all this by the factor of the future. Results were not to be expected at present, but at the future day of final account.[4]

[1] St. Matt. xxv. 34–46. [2] Ibid. vi. 31, 32.
[3] Ibid. v. 3–12. [4] Ibid. v. 12; St. Luke xiv. 14.

The retribution taught by Christ is, therefore, social as well as individual, spiritual rather than material, partial in the present and needing the future to round its completeness.

The condition of the soul after this present life is not directly described by Christ, but is led up to through this avenue of retribution. His teaching embraced both the lines in which men were interested: What is the destiny of each man, and what is the future destiny of the world? This teaching was differently apprehended and amalgamated with their own thought by different ones among His followers, and we have therefore in the New Testament several varying and in some respects conflicting schemes of eschatology.

In the Synoptic Gospels the Messiah's kingdom is regarded as established here and now, and, therefore, as already present.[1] The fullness of its perfection, however, lies only in the future, and in this sense the kingdom is not yet come. It is to come, according to one view,

[1] St. Luke iv. 21; St. Mark i. 15; St. Matt. xii. 28.

through development by the ordinary laws of growth, such as are seen in yeast and growing seed.[1] According to another view, it is to be introduced by one or more catastrophic events — the Second Coming of Christ,[2] the Final Judgment,[3] the Resurrection, and end of all things.[4] Different views also prevailed as to the time when the Messiah would come to establish His kingdom. The Advent, it was declared, would take the world by surprise; it would be sudden, unexpected, like Noah's Flood.[5] It might occur at any moment, like a flash of lightning.[6] On the other hand, it could only come when the conditions were ripe, just as vultures will not gather together unless there is a carcase to call them;[7] and the conditions could not be ripe until the slow process of the world's development had taken place. For the kingdom was like seed sown in the ground, which must be a long time in maturing through

[1] St. Matt. xiii. 33; St. Mark iv. 26.
[2] St. Matt. xvi. 27. [3] Ibid. xxv. 31, 32.
[4] St. Luke xiv. 14; St. Matt. xiii. 39, 40.
[5] St. Matt. xxiv. 37–40. [6] Ibid. v. 27.
[7] Ibid. v. 28.

the different stages of blade, ear, and fruit;[1] whose expansion, like that of a mustard-tree, would be out of all proportion to its original size.[2] Wars and upheavals must first take place in the political world,[3] and the Gospel must be preached throughout the earth to all nations.[4] There was, in this view, nothing sudden or catastrophic about the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom. It was not an event; it was a process.

It does not come within our present purpose to discuss how far these different views represent those of Christ Himself. We are merely setting forth briefly the eschatology of the Synoptic Gospels.

The eschatology of the Fourth Gospel is different from both of the schemes found in the Synoptists. One of these, as we have seen, contemplates the establishment of the kingdom of Christ in the world as a dramatic event, liable to occur at any moment. The other regards it as taking place only at the end

[1] St. Mark iv. 26–29.
[2] St. Matt. xxiv. 7.
[3] Ibid. 31, 32.
[4] Ibid. 14.

of a long evolutionary process. In the Fourth Gospel, however, the kingdom is treated as subjective and spiritual. Indeed, it is almost wholly superseded by the conception "life," "eternal life."[1] The characteristic blessing, which the Messiah's kingdom will bring to those who share in it, is invincible life.[2] This life consists in the knowledge of God and of Christ,[3] and is therefore already a present possession.[4] Martha mentions the popular doctrine of the resurrection — that it will take place ages hence at the end of the world. But Jesus at once corrects so low and unspiritual a view: "I am the resurrection and the life." In one who has the knowledge of Him, the resurrection has taken place already, so that though he may, as we say, die, yet he is really living, and can never die.[5] In the same way the Judgment is not a scenic event of the distant future, but consists in the relation of

[1] "Kingdom" is mentioned only three times: iii. 3, 5; xviii. 36; and in these cases it has a non-earthly, spiritual character.

[2] St. John, x. 28.

[3] Ibid. xvii. 3.

[4] Ibid. vi. 47.

[5] Ibid. xi. 25, 26.

every man to Christ. As Christ is the absolute standard for humanity, each man is judged automatically by his likeness or unlikeness to Him;[1] and this judgment, like the resurrection, is taking place now and all the time. Relationship to Christ — this is every man's κρίσις, determining his present and his future; or rather, abolishing all question of time, and making ultimate destiny synonymous with spiritual condition.[2]

Turning from the Fourth Gospel, we find in the eschatology of St. Paul a notable instance of the development of doctrine; for his conception of the destiny of the individual and

[1] St. John iii. 18, 19; ix. 39.

[2] Ibid. v. 24. There is one passage in the Fourth Gospel in marked contradiction to this subjective view. It is v. 28, 29. Here the resurrection is depicted as a future event in material terms. The two verses are also in antagonism with the context, which is rendered harmonious only by their excision. As they are in such open conflict with the fundamental conceptions of the Fourth Gospel and as this is its only passage of the kind, they can hardly be regarded as genuine. For a discussion of them, cf. Prof. R. H. Charles: "A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life," p. 370; Prof. H. H. Wendt: "The Teaching of Jesus," Vol. I. p. 256, n.

the end of the world passed through several different stages. He discovers, as he grows older, that his earlier conception involved unspiritual and self-contradictory elements, and these he does not hesitate to discard in his later Epistles in the interest of a more consistent and spiritual conception of the central formative thought — the establishment of Christ's kingdom. In the earliest of his Epistles — those to the Thessalonians — he adopts the current Jewish view — that the world will grow worse and worse until a climax of evil is reached, whose force will be led by and embodied in Antichrist, or the Man of Sin.[1] Whether this is a specific person or a power of evil personified is not indicated. But he will, in any case, be a counterfeit of the true Messiah, and will endeavor to place his throne in the Temple at Jerusalem. This, however, will be the signal for the descent from heaven of Christ, who will slay Antichrist by the breath of His mouth.[2] The scene of the descent is painted with vividness

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 3–10. [2] Ibid. ii. 4, 8.

and in detail. Suddenly there will peal through the sky the sound of a trumpet. With a great shout an archangel will utter a proclamation of the end of all things. Jesus will then appear, coming down from heaven, seated upon the clouds, surrounded by hosts of angels. Faithful Christians will rise from their graves and will be joined by the faithful who are still alive, and all together will be lifted up into the air to meet the Lord.[1] Thenceforth they dwell forever with Him in heavenly glory.[2] The godless among Jews and Gentiles, those who are not followers of Christ, will be punished with annihilation.[3] All this will take place in the lifetime of the apostle and those to whom he writes.[4]

By the time St. Paul came to write his Epistles to the Corinthians four or five years later, this dramatic conception of the end of the world, which was so largely modelled upon the Jewish Apocalypses, had been in some re-

[1] 1 Thess. iv. 15–18; 2 Thess. i. 7.
[2] 1 Thess. ii. 12; iv. 17.
[3] 2 Thess. i. 8, 9.
[4] 1 Thess. iv. 15; v. 23.

spects modified. Antichrist, who bore so prominent a part in the earlier scheme, is not mentioned. Instead of a reign of evil before the final Judgment, there will be a reign of Christ on earth, which, however, will be one of conflict against all opposing forces. This will last until all opposition, and even death itself, has been overcome. Then Christ will deliver up His kingdom to God the Father.[1] The setting of the scene of Christ's appearing is still the same in many of its details — the unexpectedness of the event, the blast of the trumpet, the resurrection of the faithful dead; and the date is still in the lifetime of that generation.[2] But another thought has now appeared, which in reality is at variance with this external mode of regarding the coming of Christ and the resurrection. There were those at Corinth who acknowledged the resurrection of Jesus as a historic fact but denied any general resurrection.[3] But, says St. Paul, there is an inward and spiritual connection with Christ which

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 24–28. [2] Ibid. xv. 51, 52.
[3] Ibid. xv. 12.

necessarily involves resurrection. For as all die who are in Adam — he is the apostle's type of merely natural, unspiritual existence — so all live who are in Christ.[1] It is this being "in Christ," and this only, which makes resurrection possible.[2] Life with Christ itself constitutes the resurrection.

Here then we find St. Paul coming upon that thought of the union of the soul with Christ as being in itself life eternal, which we noted in the Fourth Gospel. Throughout the Epistles of his middle and later periods this thought forms the centre of his interest. Christ for him has ceased to be merely the title of Jesus of Nazareth, and has come to be a designation of the ideal man, of his own highest self, the embodiment of the possibilities of the soul and of the race, the divine side of humanity and there-

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 22. Note here the importance of the arrangement of the words: ἐν τῷ Ἀδὰμ πάντες = all who are in Adam; ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ πάντες = all who are in Christ.

[2] It is to be noted that as the first or natural man (v. 47). "flesh and blood" (v. 50), cannot inherit the kingdom of God, there can be no resurrection of the wicked. Cf. 2 Macc. vii. 14.

fore the human side of God. He turns the thought on every side. "Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen." [1] Henceforth throughout the apostle's life he dwells more and more upon the inward union between the believer and Christ, and upon the Parousia not in the world but in the soul. In his last authentic Epistles — those to the Ephesians (?), Philippians, and Colossians — the Jewish and dramatic elements which he inherited have largely dropped away. It is the cosmic significance of Christ in which he is now interested — Christ as the embodiment of eternal processes going on in the soul and therefore in the world. He is the principle of cohesion, making all things into unity.[2] Christ, the likeness of Christ, is the end towards which all things are tending by a Divine evolution.[3] The resurrection no longer consists for him in the coming up of the body from its grave, but in the full apprehension of that spiritual side of himself, for the sake of which Christ has laid hold on him, and which is to be

[1] Rom. xi. 36. [2] Col. i. 17. [3] Eph. i. 10.

reached through fellowship with the sufferings of Christ.[1] He is so eager in tracing the universal reach of Christ's beneficent redeeming power that he extends it into regions which, because they were unimportant, had been left in his mind as a Jewish inheritance, unaffected by the deeper character of his new thought. Christ must have gone down to Sheol to bring the knowledge of redemption to the imprisoned spirits there.[2] The good news must have been heralded through the realms of angelic beings,[3] where he subdued and triumphed over the various orders — "thrones," "dominions," "principalities," "powers" — by which that world is peopled.[4] The apostle is still looking for a visible coming of Christ, but he is no longer confident that it will occur in his lifetime. Perhaps he will depart and be with

[1] Phil. iii. 10–13. If resurrection means rising from the grave, the first clause of v. 12 is absurd. He would have no need to tell them that he has not yet attained to the resurrection in this sense. But the remainder of the verse defines what he means by the resurrection, and v. 10 shows the method of attainment.

[2] Eph. iv. 9, 10. Cf. 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20.

[3] Col. i. 20. [4] Ibid. i. 16; ii. 15.

Christ, which after all would be far better.[1] But the spectacular side of the Parousia, whenever it may be, has lost interest for him under the moulding influence of a more spiritual conception of Christ. And in the last words we hear from him — for however doubtfully authentic the Epistles to Timothy may be as a whole, parts of them are unmistakably from the lips of St. Paul, and this we must hold to be one of those parts — we see him, an old man, sitting in his prison at Rome, knowing now that his course is finished, and that he will not see "the day" before his death, but confident that a crown will be laid up for him and for all the faithful, which they will receive from their Lord whenever He shall come.[2]

Thus we trace throughout St. Paul's Epistles a steady growth in his thought of the end of the world and the final destiny of man. While at first he pictures that which is the key to these — the coming of Christ — as an outward event,

[1] Phil. i. 23, 24.

[2] 2 Tim. iv. 6–9. Note the length of time implied in ἀνάκειται.

having no inherently necessary connection with them, no eternal basis for itself, he comes to regard Christ as bound to the soul by an indissoluble spiritual bond, the recognition of which by the soul constitutes resurrection. Christ's coming, therefore, in case both of the individual and of the world, is not so much an event as a process, a process taking place here and now; and whether it will ever be embodied in an historic event, is consequently a matter of little importance. It is through such changes that we see the Apostle's thought passing. It did not attain complete consistency, for there remained in it to the last material elements received from the thought of the day which were left undetected and unspiritualized. But these are of little weight in comparison with the central truth of the profoundest importance, that towards which all his thought tends and which he lovingly develops in manifest ways — that union with Christ, with what is representative of Him, is life, and that this life is unaffected by death but is eternal and glorious.

The eschatology of the Book of the Revelation

is more primitive than those we have been considering; that is, it is founded more directly on Jewish conceptions, and they are less modified by distinctively Christian thought. The Book professes to unfold to the Christian churches for their comfort the scenes which will attend the Coming of Christ and the end of the age. It is a drama in form, setting forth in five Acts the different aspects of the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ. The first two Acts — the opening of the Seals of Fate, and the Blowing of the Trumpets of Woe — deal with the upheavals which had been taking place in the political and natural world, regarded as signs of the end. The Third Act sees the Kingdom of Christ established. The Fourth depicts the results of this on its retributive side, in the judgment of the world and therefore pre-eminently the judgment of Rome. The Fifth shows the full Christian Triumph, in the marriage of the Prince of Heaven to His Bride — the Church, — the final overthrow of the powers of evil, the renovation of both heaven and earth, and the blessedness of the righteous

in dwelling with God. The Book is thus prophetic rather than predictive; that is, it gives the principles which will determine the future rather than the events of the future. In this respect it is like the Book of Genesis. That does not contain the actual history of the world's beginning, but it reveals the Divine laws which gave method to creation. So the Book of the Revelation does not furnish a guide to the events attendant upon the end of the world, but it shows the principles which must inevitably determine the end.[1]

It is one of the many indications that the author is moulded largely by Judaism, that he hardly touches upon the future in relation to the individual, but is occupied almost wholly with the destiny of the institution — the Church. According to his scheme of eschatology, there will be two Comings of Christ and two resurrections. The first Coming will take place very

[1] For a fuller consideration of these aspects of the Book of the Revelation, cf. "The Drama of the Apocalypse in Relation to the Literary and Political Circumstances of its Time," by the present writer (The Macmillan Co., 1903).

soon. Indeed, it is the object of his Book to encourage the Christians to hold out under the persecution they were enduring, with the thought that it was but for a little while.[1] Again and again the comforting assurance is given that the Lord will come quickly.[2] The consummation is so near that it will not be worth while to attempt to change the moral condition of the world as a preparation for the Lord, as John the Baptist attempted to do. Let both those that are unjust and those that are righteous remain as they are; the Lord will judge between them.[3] Indeed the author narrows the time more definitely; it is distant not a full prophetic week — one of the sacred units of time;[4] it is distant only half a week — three years and a half.[5] This statement, however, did not convey that definiteness which it would with us, but to the Oriental mind would be equivalent to a few years. This first Coming of Christ will

[1] Rev. i. 1–4.
[2] Ibid. i. 3, 7; ii. 16; iii. 3, 11; xxii. 10, 12.
[3] Ibid. xxii. 11.
[4] Cf. Lev. xxv. 8; Dan. ix. 24 ff.
[5] Rev. xi. 2, 3; xii. 6; xiii. 5.

be accompanied by a resurrection, but of those only who had suffered martyrdom.[1] At the same time the Devil will be seized, bound in chains, and cast into a bottomless pit, where he must remain till the second Coming of Christ. The period between the two Comings will be a thousand years, and during this time the saints who have risen will reign with Christ on earth in a kingdom which, as the Prince of Evil is banished, will be a state of unalloyed bliss.[2] The character of the Messianic reign as thus described is exactly opposite to that assigned it in the only other passage in which it is mentioned.[3] St. Paul regards it as a state of continual conflict, in which Christ will war against all opposing powers, and after conquering them one by one, will deliver up His sovereignty to God the Father. The duration of His reign is not fixed, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, at a thousand years, as in the Book of the Revelation, but is determined by

[1] Rev. xx. 4–6.
[2] Ibid. xx. 2–8; v. 10.
[3] 1 Cor. xv. 23–29.

the time necessary for the complete subjugation of His enemies.

According to the Apocalypse, at the close of the Millennium, will occur the Second Coming of Christ. As the Seer describes the events attending it, there appears upon the sombre side of his picture a bright, a kindly and human touch. Satan will be loosed from his chains and freed from the pit. This apparently is for the purpose of giving him one more chance.[1] It is the same feeling of pitying sympathy which made the Scotch poet, who dared to laugh at the Devil and thereby destroyed so largely his power over the modern world, take a hopeful view of the possibility of repentance for even the Devil himself.[2] But the experiment is vain. Satan immediately enters again upon his characteristic work of opposition to the Kingdom

[1] Rev. xx. 7–11.

[2] "But fare ye weel, auld Nickie-ben!
O wad ye tak' a thought an' men',
Ye aiblins might — I dinna ken —
Still hae a stake!
I 'm wae to think upon yon den,
Ev'n for your sake!"
R. Burns: "Address to the Deil."

of Christ. He gathers together those remote and vaguely known nations which the ancient prophet had seen hovering like a cloud on the distant outskirts of the world, and which he had summed up under the general names, Gog and Magog.[1] With this vast army Satan besieges the capital of Christ's kingdom — Jerusalem. But just as Jahveh had interposed in old times and saved His people by a stroke from a besieging northern army, that of the Assyrians,[2] so He will interpose now and suddenly destroy the invaders with a blast from heaven. The chief offenders, however, are cast into a lake of fire and brimstone, where they are tortured for ever and ever.

Then comes the resurrection of all men and the final judgment.[3] The wicked are cast into the lake of fire.[4] The righteous enter upon the

[1] Ezek. xxxviii, xxxix. [2] 2 Kings xix. 35.

[3] Rev. xx. 11 ff.

[4] Beyschlag thinks that in regard to the retribution of the wicked, "the representation wavers between eternal torment and complete annihilation." He regards xiv. 9–11 and xx. 10, as affirming eternal retribution. On the other hand, when it said that "not merely the Devil and Anti-Christ but also death and Hades, which are not persons, are

full glories of the Kingdom of Christ, and reign with Him. Earth is not absorbed into Heaven, but there is a renovation of all things, so complete that Heaven itself shares in it, and there is a new Heaven as well as a new earth. But both centre in Jerusalem. And its centre is not, as with the original Jerusalem, the Temple. For here we find the Seer of the Apocalypse, who is so often materialistic in his conceptions of the Kingdom of Christ, touching the profounder thought which we noticed in the Fourth Gospel. The centre of the New Jerusalem, that which constitutes its essence and glory, is the presence of God; and this is no longer limited to one abode, to curtained tent, aloof from the Congregation, or to gorgeous Temple. His dwelling place is in humanity itself. "I heard a great voice out of Heaven saying, 'Behold the tabernacle of God is with Men.'" All the charms that can touch the eye with a sense of gorgeousness, or the weary heart with a sense

cast into the lake of fire, that can only mean the abolition of death as a power and the annihilation of his kingdom, as in 1 Cor. xv. 26." — "New Testament Theology," II. p. 404.

of comfort, or the pure soul with a sense of the joys of moral righteousness, all are combined in the description of the completed, glorified Kingdom of God.

It has been then increasingly plain, as we have followed through the Old and New Testaments the development of thought in regard to life after death, that at no period has final completeness of statement been reached. The details of one scheme are not only different from but often flatly contradictory to those of another. Many of the most confident assertions of Biblical writers in regard to eschatology have been clearly shown to be erroneous by the course of history. The last-mentioned scheme especially, that of the Book of the Revelation, warns us by the absurdities into which we fall if we attempt to take it literally, that such schemes are valuable not for their forecast but for their spiritual insight. So far as they enunciate principles, these will be found to be permanent and precious. So far as they attempt to predict the embodiment of these principles, they are subject to the limitations of the author and his

time. Such schemes are not for the future what history is for the past — accurate statements of definite events. They must be read as prophecy, not prediction, as literature, not dogma, as furnishing inspiration, not as giving information about future ages. So regarded, they will be found to state, each in the language intelligible in its time, the eternal principles which must govern the future of the world and of the individual; principles which must inevitably hold sway hereafter because they hold sway now. Beneath every such scheme in the New Testament there lies a belief in the eternal justice of God, and therefore a conviction of the ultimate triumph of righteousness, a stern hatred of evil, and a sense of the preciousness of human personality. It is along these lines of eternal justice — justice which allows no evil to go unpunished and no righteousness to be unrewarded, which has regard to the organic welfare of the world and to the due of the individual, which judges not by chance nor whim but by the characters engraved in the book of each man's life, which will not lose one shred

of personality that is capable of being saved, which will not cease until the whole universe is brought into harmony with God — it is along such lines, the mind of humanity has asserted and will be forever convinced, that the Divine plan must draw to its glorious end.

With all the differences of view as to the future which have been noted among the writers of the New Testament, the bond of unity among them must not be overlooked. It is their firm conviction of the reality and nearness of the Kingdom of God. Whether they contemplate it as belonging to the future or as already established, as cataclysmic in its coming or as a natural and gradual process, whether Christ will descend through the clouds or come in the hearts of men, whether this will take place in the lifetime of that generation or whether the days of the Lord which must first elapse will be each a thousand years; from all the varying points of view one and the same central fact is confidently discerned — that a new era has dawned for the world, which is marching surely

and swiftly on to its full and joyous consummation. In this era Christ is the central figure, and all others are assessed through their relation to Him. This is the Kingdom of Christ. The belief in its reality created for those who held it a different world from that of all others. It filled them with enthusiasm, with loyalty to their Master and to one another, with inextinguishable zeal for every effort which might aid in establishing the Kingdom, and with readiness to die with the realization of their vision unaccomplished and their faith undiminished. The progress of the world is ordinarily so gradual that its different stages can hardly be delimited. Sometimes, however, a movement in thought or action stands out clearly as a separating and mediating zone. Such, we are accustomed to say, was the Renaissance, dividing the mediæval from the modern world. But such, far more completely, was the Christian era. It had its roots in the past and led on by natural stages; but in its results it was nothing less than a convulsion. Milton, in his "Hymn on the Nativity," was right; the gods,

the ideals, of the ancient world fell and died when the Babe of Bethlehem was born. And it was this which, with all their differences of detail, the writers of the New Testament foresaw.

# Philosophic Grounds for the Belief in Immortality

## IV

# Philosophic Grounds for the Belief in Immortality[1]

WE were calling attention to the impossibility of a satisfactory doctrine of immortality as long as the view of human personality is incomplete. Such incompleteness affects, it is true, not this doctrine only but all; for his own personality is the telescope through which man must view God and all relations with Him. No greatness is visible in God, no moral adjustment is possible among men, without a large and complex personality to perceive and interpret them. Man's understanding of himself is therefore a condition of understanding God. But while fulness of personality intelligently apprehended is necessary for the develop-

[1] The following chapter is taken in part from the chapter on Immortality in "Studies in Theologic Definition," by the present author.

ment of all doctrines, it is especially necessary in case of the doctrine of the future. What we think of the future will be largely determined by what we think of the present. Whether we believe man capable of outlasting death will depend on whether he shows himself capable of mastering life. The study of personality then will have a profound effect on our view of the future. In early ages, before this study was pursued scientifically, the views held could not have the degree of certainty, breadth, and satisfactoriness which have been possible since the development of psychology and the other sciences dealing with personality. The study of science during the third quarter of the last century was thought to have made impossible a rational belief in the future. That same study during the last quarter has seemed to establish and expand such a belief. This latter tendency of scientific research, if such is the tendency, is encouraging, as in line with a truer view of revelation than has often been held. It has been supposed that our knowledge of life after death must rest on one of two foundations. On

the one hand, it might come through revelation. By this is meant that the writers of the Scriptures, or those whose words they report, had in some way a full and authentic knowledge of the future. The complete truth in this respect is therefore contained somewhere in their utterances. Our only concern is to disentangle it. When found, the dictum is final. On the other hand, there are those who hold that the only data for a knowledge of the future must lie in the constitution of man, the laws of nature, the necessary processes of human thought. The curve of the future will be the resultant of the factors at work in the present. These two methods are apt to look with hostility upon each other, each regarding itself as alone legitimate and the other with contempt as a thief. But every confirmation by the one of an utterance of the other, such as that mentioned above, tends to a recognition of the two methods as belonging together, each being a part of that gradual unveiling of truth which in its full sweep alone can claim the name of revelation. For the contribution of any man or genera-

tion, however authentic, is only a step towards the development of that body of truth which is being forever revealed with greater fulness. What is implanted in the nature of things is as truly a revelation of God as that which, in whatever manner, was revealed to men in former times. Truth is a matter which cannot be received through hearing unless it is also discovered. Divine revelation then consists in the inspired utterances of men throughout history weighed together with the clearest research of each present age into the laws of being of man and nature. It is only when such a view of revelation prevails that Ephraim can cease to envy Judah and Judah can cease to vex Ephraim.

It is held by most persons at present that the evidence of direct communication with the other world is inconclusive, and that any knowledge of the future after death, apart from that which the Bible may be thought to convey, must come by implication. It is at least certain that any revelation *ab extra* of the fact of another life could be neither understood nor accepted

unless it expressed that for which the constitution of man and nature stood ready. There would be such readiness if life before death necessarily implied life after death, if the latter were involved as the completion of the former, if the former could not be understood or were self-contradictory without it. If there were discernible in any element of life at present an ability to transcend time and place, the power to survive death would be implied in this. Such implications, however, would not constitute a demonstration, for they all must depend upon an underlying postulate. Granting that a hereafter-part is necessary to the completion of what we may call the normal plan: all that is certain is that this hereafter-part will be realized if the normal plan is fulfilled. But such fulfilment is not demonstrable; we cannot prove that the plan will be fulfilled. Even though the limitation of life to this side of death should involve a self-contradiction, it may be that the universe is no universe, no self-consistent whole, but a mass of absurdities, lacking unity or cohesion. We cannot demonstrate that this is not

the case. The underlying postulate then must, if taken at all, be taken for granted. All we can look for in case of knowledge of the hereafter is that it shall have such ground of probability as has our belief that God exists, or that the universe has a reasonable basis and plan. Does the nature of things have anything to say as to the ultimate fact of existence? Does what we see tell us anything about what we do not see? We can understand that it might not. I might know all about one square of a checker-board in itself, and yet know nothing of its neighbor, not even that it had a neighbor. But every stick of wood that I pick up prophesies of a tree-trunk of which it was a part, of causative roots and resultant branches. Its organic life thrusts upon me knowledge of more than itself. Now is the existence of man a self-contained square, unprophetic of anything beyond this life; or is it essentially so organic that it demands more than itself for the understanding of itself? We cannot but maintain the latter position: that each part of the universe is so organically united to every

other that the whole is involved in every part, so that any one being given, the others must inevitably follow. If this is the case, the conditions of life here will have something to tell us concerning the conditions of life elsewhere — whether there is such life and what is its character.

But before receiving any evidence we must stipulate that the terms of it shall bear the same meaning when asserted of life hereafter, if they make any such assertions, that they have here. To assert that I shall live, but that the term "I" will have lost any element at present essential to it, so that it will not be recognizable as "I," will prevent us from considering the evidence further. There must be life hereafter which shall be the continuity in all essentials of the present life, or there must be a cause sufficient to destroy the present life. It may be — for I cannot prove the contrary — that I am now existing in two places at once, but with no consciousness as to my other locality. That other existence, however, differs from this, in lacking the element of self-conscious-

ness, and the consensus of mankind justifies me in refusing to be responsible for it or to concern myself in the least as to its reality. "I" must be I, and "life" must be life, or we will cease to talk about the matter.

This stipulation settles the position we shall assign to arguments which assert that there will be life hereafter, but it will be a corporate life, in which individual consciousness will have vanished; I shall live in the race of humankind as an element in its being, but there will be no consciousness of existence, because no existence as an individual. Just as I now owe myself in part to every sailor who struggled across the trackless ocean toward unknown America, to every Egyptian who painted his hieroglyphics without a thought of me, to every cave-dweller who crunched his bones with hardly the capacity of thought, so I am contributing to the development of the future race; my work will live in them, and because it lives, whether they recognize their debt to me or not, I shall live also.

"Oh, may I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence: live
In pulses stirred to generosity,
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
For miserable aims that end with self,
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
And with their mild persistence urge man's search
To vaster issues.
So to live is heaven. —
This is life to come,
Which martyred men have made more glorious
For us to strive to follow." [1]

But we are compelled to stop such an earnest soul in the midst of his song and ask him whether he considers the condition of a Tartar in one of the tribes of Central Asia an integral part of his own present condition. Would the death of the Tartar in a foraging raid to-morrow affect him? If it would not, then this corporate element which binds him to every human being would seem to stand on a different plane from those elements of existence of which he is directly conscious. Undoubtedly this corporate element is real, and undoubtedly it may furnish a noble stimulus to lofty endeavor. Even our

[1] George Eliot.

Lord was not above feeling its encouraging inspiration: "For their sakes I sanctify Myself." But that it by itself may be called life in the same sense in which we apply the term to that kind of existence in which self-conscious personality dominates, we cannot allow. And if corporate life here is not sufficient by itself to be called life, why should it be sufficient hereafter?

Dualism is planted deep in the human mind together with its corollary — that the infinite is the opposite of the finite; and noble and unselfish souls have always been strongly attracted to mysticism, the belief that it is by negation of the finite that the infinite is to be reached. If mysticism's postulate is true, man can approach God only by the annihilation of himself; the human must cease to be, that the divine may emerge. And at once at the summons of this thought there rise to the view the self-inflicted tortures of Oriental devotees in their attempts to crucify the flesh with the affections thereof; the ecstasies of mediæval saints, striving to be lost in God; the struggles of many a pale

Puritan woman, trying to convince herself that the less will she had the more truly was God's will done; the aspirations of the new convert as he joins the revival song:

"Oh, to be nothing, nothing!
Only to lie at His feet,
A broken and empty vessel,
For the Master's uses meet!"

We see them all walking hand in hand with one another and with the Hindu monk, studying to keep his thoughts from wandering from the central *Om*, and thus to reach the logical development of mysticism, Nirvana, the annihilation of all thought, desire, personal existence. We shudder as the ghastly procession passes before us; and yet we recognize our brethren, the children of the thought which has been the parent of much that is best in us.

We cannot hold to the fundamental position of mysticism, because, attractive as it is, we must believe that the infinite is reached not by the negation of the finite, but by its realization. The universal must, in our view, not exclude but include the particular. Corporate immor-

tality, then, is no sufficient immortality, because it lacks the individual element. The unity to which it would reduce the universe, as one individual after another became extinct, would be an incomplex, desert unity, an infinite $x$. We must hold that the individual element is as necessary to the universal as the universal to the individual. And therefore in assigning place to the evidence for my corporate life hereafter, as it does not mean "my" and does not mean "life," we shall unhesitatingly not put it with the arguments which tend to establish immortality.

We asked existence to furnish us necessary implications, and we would unfold them. The fact that life is too large for its present setting has for ages seemed to nobly demanding men to imply that there was a larger field hereafter, where the soul could expand in accordance with the possibilities of its nature. In this view death itself is the strongest presumption of a life after death. A man devotes years to the preparation for some noble work. Just as he enters upon it he dies. If that is the end, there has been

a great waste for him and for the world. And the same is true in case not only of the exceptional person, but of almost every one. The powers of the soul do not find, as they develop, a field commensurate with their development; they are hemmed in and forbidden full action. The knowledge how to live does not come until life is over. More spiritual force is generated than the occasion calls for or can use. Sooner than suppose this apparent awful waste of the most precious thing in the universe to be real, it is to many a less strain on belief to hold that death is the apparent and unreal thing, and that there is a continuity of life hereafter, where powers meet their due opportunity. The preparation, of which life here so largely consists, finds its justification there.

> "On the earth the broken arcs;
> In the heaven a perfect round." [1]

Taken by itself, this argument seems hardly more than a strong presumption, affording legitimate ground for an earnest hope. For it

[1] Robert Browning: Abt Vogler.

may be, for all this argument can show, that life here is the dreary irrationality, the gigantic jest, which it would be if the field of action were on this side of the grave only. But if it should be established on other grounds that the universe is rational and organic, then this argument would indeed be of weight as pointing out an instance of logical implication, and a department of existence organically necessary to the comprehension of the present department. If the universe is in any respect teleological, this seems a legitimate instance of its teleology.

Scientific research has sometimes seemed to weaken the force of this argument by its failure to discover evidence of the existence of spirit apart from brain. But in reality it seems rather to strengthen it. For from the discovery of the universality of law it follows that the laws of the physical world hold good, *mutatis mutandis*, in the spiritual world also; and the assertion by science of the indestructibility of force would seem to carry with it the corollary of the persistence of that force, personality, which has been evolved here. This

must either persist or be transmuted into an equivalent, as arrested motion is transmuted into heat. Gases and dust may be an equivalent for the body, but they can be no equivalent for the personality inhabiting the body. The only equivalent we can conceive for that would be the personality itself adapted to new conditions, a personality transcending time and place. We see the germ of such in every loving heart which is carried beyond itself in its passionate devotion; in every inquiring mind which in its loyalty to knowledge finds beneath itself the immutable strength of abstract thought; in every powerful will which bears in itself its own completeness, and to which obstacles come as from an outside sphere. This transcending personality we know here in germ, and our experience reveals it to us as the only true personality, while personality permanently limited by time and place appears in its light a contradiction in terms.

But scientific study has added still another piece of presumptive evidence in favor of immortality, a presumption which could hardly

have been recognized before the discovery of the law of evolution. We have learned that the world with all that it contains was not created complete in its present form, but that it has arisen during long ages through a series of steps, each step following its predecessor in a manner which exhibits law, progress, and organic connection with it. Gaseous nebulæ condense in their rotation and deposit a rocky core. Rocks crumble into soil. Soil gives birth to vegetable life. By and by there appear plants having the ability to take in solid nutriment which they now demand shall have been prepared for them by other plants; and immediately the animal kingdom comes into being. The simplest forms of animal life, sponges and their kindred protozoans, have the waters to themselves until fishes dominate them. Innovating fish venture out upon the land, take to breathing air, develop legs or wings, and become reptiles or birds. Some of these improve their condition by bringing forth their young alive, and at once the reign of mammals begins. At last consciousness develops into self-con-

sciousness, the ability not only to feel and perceive, but to regard one's self as an object of thought, and man appears. Each step is an advance on the preceding; everywhere the tide goes forward without ebb, though particular waves recede. Individual species may retrograde, following backward in reverse order the path of advance; but then extinction soon tells the world they are on the wrong track. Degradations may occur, a violent plunge to disorganization and death; for the privilege of going to hell exists throughout the organic world. But the fact that these are blind alleys, over which nature erects the warning, "No thoroughfare," points significantly to steady progress in development as the avenue to life. The individual who refuses to follow the path of the universal plunges into ruin. The universe's plan for itself is forward.

A remarkable fact about these stages of evolution is that difference of degree becomes difference of kind; or, to express it otherwise, that appears in the result which was not directly present in the component elements. When

hydrogen and oxygen are mixed in certain proportions and an electric spark is passed through them, they disappear, and a quantity of water equal in weight to the sum of their weights appears in their place.[1] One inorganic substance somehow advances a step beyond its fellows and acquires the power of storing its experience and handing it on; and immediately it abandons forever its former companions and becomes organic. Consciousness cannot be resolved into its component elements; but at some point in the world's development the fit conditions met in the womb of time, and consciousness appeared.

The course of the world, then, has been a regular progress, each step being an advance upon the preceding, till it culminates in the highest type of man. Now does the process stop here? Does the ultimate, the most precious result, in its turn lead to nothing, but

[1] "There is not the slightest parity between the passive and the active powers of the water and those of the oxygen and hydrogen which have given rise to it." Prof. T. H. Huxley: The Physical Basis of Life, in "Lay Sermons," p. 136.

does it then revert to an inorganic position back near the beginning of the series, to climb the steps over again? If that is the case, then the course of the world is an instance of suicide on a gigantic scale. In spite of the evidence of progress which evolution exhibits, there is no progress, but only cyclic motion, for the end returns and joins the beginning. In order to avoid such a conclusion and not give the lie to this great evolutionary plan, it seems more reasonable to suppose that the present stage also develops organically into another, which is as truly an advance upon this as human life is upon that of the animal. Unless this is so, the plan of the universe, so far as we see it, has failed at its culminating point. The universe has wound up and gone into the hands of a receiver. And to find irrationality here is as truly, if not as evidently, a discovery of the reign of chaos as to find the triangle, which we had always supposed to have three angles, to have but two. If evolution stops at death, the whole series is discredited, and becomes lacking in respect and, in some of its parts, in

credibility. For what the theory seemed to bear witness to was progressive development as the law of the universe. But if it is the law of only a part of the universe, and that the least important part, it is an affair of trifling interest. If man, however, may develop an existence independent of time and place, which is therefore immortal; if there is thus a clear way from man straight up to God, as there is from the lowest plant straight up to man, then evolution is indeed the key to the method of the universe, the logic of God's action, and full of absorbing interest and superlative importance. As says Thomas Hill Green, it is impossible to believe without intellectual confusion that a system whose visible goal is the evolution of personality ends in the extinction of personality.

Conceding however in regard to a future existence that it is, it may be objected that we do not know what it is. And when we have fully faced our ignorance here, it inclines us to turn about and revoke our concession. If we can know nothing about it, do we know that it is

at all? Ought not the fact of existence to reveal somewhat of its character? And may not the lack of the one make us doubt the other? Certainly it justly may. We are right in insisting that something of the character of existence must lie in the very fact. Yet it is not the case that we know nothing of the life hereafter. If personality is to be preserved, there must be the preservation of the elements which are essential to personality. Consciousness, intelligence, the affections, the will, some degree at least of memory — these are for us the constituent elements of being; we cannot conceive ourselves without them. It seems, therefore, a necessary inference that if we are to exist at all after death, it will be in an existence cast in this mould. These characteristics of personality must have at least no less being and range than they have here. And this tells us much as to the nature and even the occupations of the next life. But as to its circumstances we must probably remain ignorant. Yet ignorance such as this in no way invalidates the fact, for it affects the details of that life, not its essentials.

Moreover, certainty as to the fact and uncertainty as to the limiting conditions is just what we should expect would accompany every stage of progress. Previous stages would be remembered or traced through their effects. But a succeeding stage is, *ex hypothesi*, different to some extent in kind, and therefore could not be accurately prophesied. The ideas necessary for understanding it, the words for interpreting it, would be lacking. A large measure of ignorance as to a succeeding stage is therefore not only no disproof of its existence, but is inevitable, and, so far, an indication of the reality of the fact. "If immortality means little — the playing of harps and pianos and endless gossip — we might be told by one of its messengers what it is like. But the more it means, the less could any one — even God himself — tell us in advance what or how it could be. In this respect it would only follow the analogy of the profoundest experiences of the present life. Who could have made us know beforehand the mysteries, and yet the indisputable facts, of friendship, of fatherhood

or motherhood, of the high joys of art and poetry?" [1]

The mention of a life independent of time and place leads us to another point of view. We are led by the desire of verification to ask whether we find any indications of such a mode of life. And at once we reply that we do. As we were just now saying, we find thought to have a real existence and to be therefore independent, since all thought is not invented but discovered. We find in will an original creative force, πραξέων ἀρχή, which does not refer itself to necessary antecedents. We find a consciousness of oughtness to be so essential to human nature that we cannot conceive a human being who should not have some form of it. We exult in seeing love while losing itself find itself, and we say, "Here is the whole thing proved; here is death giving birth to life."

There is, then, a domain of existence which is independent of time and place; in which, therefore, death can have no part, any more

[1] Charles F. Dole, D.D.: "The Hope of Immortality," p. 9.

than sickness or any other event requiring a material basis. Let us for convenience' sake give this domain its name; let us call it spiritual life or the life of God. Any being, then, who shared this life of God would share its prerogatives; he would partake in a life over which death would have no power.

But can a man so identify himself with God's life? We look around to see. Here is a philanthropist so wrapped up in his "cause" that he not only identifies his interests with it, but his words, thoughts, actions, loves, and hates are all absorbed into it. "Love me, love my dog," we jeeringly say of him, and the remark is philosophically accurate. Which is the real Epictetus,— the lame slave who was hungry and poor and despised, or the free spirit in that deformed body, which held communion with the gods and made itself one with a portion of abstract and infinite thought? "God buries His workmen, but carries on His work"; does the workman who can exultingly say that belong wholly to the tool-class, a thing, temporary, extraneous to the user, or does he,

through his perception of dominating purpose and loving exultation in it, transcend his own finitude and become one with the purpose behind the work? When a noble, passionate love spends itself on a worthless object, is it all tragedy? Is there not a gloriously saving element in the fact that the lover not only gives himself, but gets himself back multiplied by a factor of inestimable worth? A local and temporal love has given birth to a love abstract and real. Surely the participation by man in one and another element of the life of God and his endowment thereby with qualities which are eternal is a fact verifiable, common, and glorious.

But may not this absorption of the Divine impair personality, or at least does it necessarily imply personality? Is it not absorption *into* the Divine, in which process individuality, and therefore personality, ceases? Does the soul hereafter become absorbed in the soul of the universe, as the fibre is absorbed in the cloth woven, or the drop in the ocean? But here again let us turn to facts and see. Do we find

that as a man grows in thought, knowledge, wise purposefulness, love, his personality decreases or increases? Is the premier of England less of a man than a tramp, or more? Is it not in so far only as he has some degree of these characteristics that he has manliness — that is, personality — at all? We are inclined to consider these as abstract qualities until we find that they are essentially personal. And so we may dismiss the fear that identification with the divine life will leave personality too feeble to maintain its identity. "What if it should prove that the hope of immortality grows naturally out of the practice of a certain worthy kind of life, and cannot be easily had except upon the terms of such a life? This is to say that immortality belongs to persons. This is to say that its quality begins here and now in so far as men become persons. The lower and the less unified the personality, the less reason has any one to be persuaded of immortality. The more we care for personality, the higher we conceive it, the more we grow toward it, the more instinctively we

are possessed with the thought that it cannot die." [1]

There is another witness whose evidence we must hear in regard to immortality. The relation of the universal to the particular has something to say to us. How is the part connected with the whole? In case of a stone, evidently in a completely external manner. Each fragment is as truly a stone as the parent. The whole is a whole merely by aggregation. Rise to the life of a tree, and we find that the whole needs the parts and is not itself without them. A tree without leaves dies. Here the whole has become organic. But any particular leaf is not essential. Pick off one, and the tree puts out another or gets along perfectly well with those that are left. The general particular is necessary, but not the particular particular. Rise again to organic and intellectual life. What is my relation to the axioms of geometry? Is not every one of them essential to my mental sanity? Not the knowledge of them in their scientific

[1] Charles F. Dole, D.D.: "The Hope of Immortality," p. 51.

form, for my child has never heard of the forty-seventh proposition of the first book of Euclid; but such a presence of them, dormant and undeveloped but real, as leads my boy to run confidently to meet me along two sides of a triangle instead of taking a hypotenuse through the snow. Could I get along without the particular truth that parallel lines will never meet? Could I ever cease to have in my nature the elements of proud, protecting love which my boy has taught me? Yes, I could; but then I should cease to be, in respect to these departments, a spiritual being; those sides of my nature would be dead. As long as I have any life of this kind, not merely is the general particular, love, necessary to me, but the particular particular, parental love.

"Ah, but not this particular child," says some sad-eyed mother; "he may be taken away, and wretched life may still drag on." Yes, but the very wretchedness is a comfort, as showing that perhaps the relation has become essential; for if it is essential, it must be permanent. My child and I are not, however,

as yet wholly spiritual beings, and therefore, on account of the non-spiritual elements in us, are in some respects separable. But I am related to God in wholly spiritual ways. I have become identified with part of His life. I am an essential part of it, since with a wholly spiritual being there are no parts which are not bound together by the law of essential or inherently necessary existence. But if I am now a part, I must, unless I lose my spirituality, continue always a part. For the universal must always need the general term, particular, for its existence; without it it would be, as we have said, incomplex, inorganic, a mere vague *x*. But the general particular is composed of particular particulars. Because I am an individual, different from every other human being who ever was or ever will be, the special element which I furnish to the universal cannot be furnished by any other individual. God, by letting me share His life, has made me a necessity to Him. It is not the case that some one else will answer just as well. He needs not only humanity, but me. As long as I con-

tinue to be that spiritual being which part of me is, as long as I keep unbroken that bond which joins me to the life of God, I have a charter of perpetuity, for God's existence is bound up with mine.

"Ich weiss dass ohne mich Gott nicht ein Nun kann leben;
Werd' ich zu nicht, Er muss von Noth den Geist aufgeben.
Ich bin so gross als Gott; Er ist als ich so klein;
Er kann nicht über mir, ich unter Ihm nicht sein." [1]

This is the thought which lies at the basis of the argument for immortality of Jesus with the Sadducees. "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him." [2] It is sometimes supposed that this is no real argument but a verbal quibble; for how does the fact that Jahveh was once Abraham's God prove Abraham's present existence? Yet there is a deeper thought under-

[1] Joh. Angelus Silesius: "Der Cherubinische Wandersmann," bk. i. 8, 10.

[2] St. Luke xx. 37, 38.

lying. If God was the God of Abraham, that is, if Abraham ever belonged to God, such must be the case still; for it cannot be affected by a mere lapse of time. If he was ever a part of the Divine, he must be so now; for parts cannot be broken off from God. Having once lived with Him, he must be living with Him ever.

This law of the necessity of the particular to the universal is exhibited in case of the Divine nature by the theologic doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. An incomplex being, even an infinite one, would be intolerable to itself. It must be object as well as subject, particular as well as universal. The Son, therefore, as this distinction of being in God is called, must be not created in time, but must have been from all eternity; He was forever "in the bosom of the Father." It is the same truth which lay in distorted form at the foundation of the Calvinistic doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. That which belongs essentially to the life of God cannot, by any condition of circumstances in this world or any

other, be torn from Him. Once His, always His. "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."[1] In applying the doctrine, however, the observance of the condition was often forgotten. I am indeed endowed with the Divine prerogatives, but only so far and so long as I share the Divine life. God needs the whole of Himself. As long as I embody part of Him, He needs me. If I cease to be identified with Him and try to exist outside Him, my link of connection with Him ceases and I cease to exist. God needs me as much as ever, but I have ceased to be I, and therefore cannot supply His need. And if any one questions how the infinite and perfect God can have an unsatisfied need, he has not yet asked himself why the world was created, nor solved the first step in the necessity for its redemption, nor analyzed the meaning of the word "love."

There are many persons whose tendency to believe in immortality is checked by the diffi-

[1] St. John x. 28.

culty of imagining details. The possession of such a belief seems to demand its official label — "I believe in the resurrection of the body." But how can this body rise from its grave? How could its particles, if it did, be utilized to form a spiritual body? If that body is not like the present one, what will it be like? Does the resurrection take place for each individual immediately after death? What then are the General Resurrection and the Judgment Day? Or, if one must wait for these, how are the intervening ages passed? Such questions have for some no sufficient basis of reality to be interesting. But they are often a puzzle and an obstacle for many who are trying to square the theology they have inherited with their own intelligent thinking. The best answer is that such details are of no importance and can wait till the event reveals them. Yet indications of their more specific answer are not lacking. The creeds are everywhere to be regarded not so much as statements of events as the expression in historic and concrete terms of processes which are daily going on, a kind

of algebraic formulæ embodying the truths of theology in the language not of one age but every age. So we may take the article of the Creed — "I believe in the resurrection of the body" — as the formula for the continuity of life, the preservation of personal identity. And if we hesitate as to our historic right to use the words with such a meaning, we may find glad relief in a study of the origin of the article. For while its framers undoubtedly believed that the very flesh which they wore would come up out of the grave, they held this because it seemed to them the condition of the preservation of personality. It was the latter which to them was the precious thing; the former was only the dress necessitated by the thought of the age. We may clothe the belief in the mode of our own time, and still preserve unity with them, provided we hold the essential kernel of their thought.

But this very word "body," at which we balk in the creed, may be more directly a window of light and comfort to us. For it insists on the preservation hereafter of that unity in

ourselves we have found so precious here. One of the terrors of death is often the thought that the soul must then come out of the body which has formed so long its familiar and attached home, and go wandering off naked and shivering. Again, men have often been repelled from religion because those who were held up as religious people cared little for the joys of sight and sound, for all the wealth of life sucked in through the senses, but devoted themselves wholly to what they called the soul. If this something within could be picked out and saved, the rest of the man, it seemed, could be allowed to lapse. Yet men not so other-worldly have felt this remainder not only as precious to themselves, but as having too great a dignity to be treated as waste. Now to both these difficulties the doctrine of the resurrection of the body furnishes relief; for it protests against the division of the individual into body and soul. These are convenient terms for the extremes of personality; but both are its constituents and both are essential to it. Monastic attempts to cast away the flesh have

always resulted disastrously for the spirit. Our relation to this bright sweet world with which we are connected by our senses is as truly a part of us as are the depths of abstract thought. The recognition of this unity is necessary to completeness of personality.

"Let us not always say,
'Spite of this flesh to-day
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole.'
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, 'All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now than flesh helps soul!'"[1]

It is this precious unity which, the article in the Apostles' Creed assures us, will be preserved in the next life. The soul there will not wander off alone, for there as here there will be no such thing as widowhood from its mate, the body. That connection with the outward world which the body has made possible for us will still be actual; the joys it has brought will form part of the joys of the next life. Not that the body then will be the same as now. Its ministrations to the soul may rise in close-

[1] Browning: "Rabbi Ben Ezra."

ness and worth. . Its weaknesses, its hindrance to the soul will undoubtedly diminish as it becomes more fully worked over into soul-stuff. But the precious unity will be preserved. The satisfaction of its fulness is a blessing to be prayed for. "We beseech Thee that we, with all those who are departed in the true faith of Thy holy name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Thy eternal and everlasting glory." [1]

We may recognize then that preservation of personal identity has necessarily and legitimately taken the place of the re-creation of this present body, and continuity of life the place of resurrection. But granting this, does not difficulty still remain in conceiving a world hereafter big enough for all its inhabitants? Any back street in any city shouts at us that there are too many of us in the world now. History startles us with the revelation of the multitudes who have lived and died and vanished. And the manufacture of human beings is going on increasingly, and will continue till the world is

[1] Burial Service of the Episcopal Church.

cold as the moon. Where can room be found for all these personalities after their death, even granting that they may without inconvenience be packed closer there than here? Imagination in trying to picture the situation is powerless. Yet this need not make us hesitate to trust our conclusion. For it is equally impossible to conceive in their methods the connection between brain and thought, the relations of will and memory, the beginning and ending of life; and yet we do not on this account question these as facts. Whether imagination then stands outside, criticising and unconvinced, or whether it enters into our problem and paints it for us in glowing colors, need make no difference other than pleasurable in the result. Yet even imagination may have some comfort. Supposing space and time have an existence in the next world as truly as in this; supposing some material embodiment is as necessary to spirit there as here. Still the universe is infinite, and infinite space must furnish room for even an infinity of personalities. That multitude does not mean over-crowding, we see every star-lit

night. Beyond the planets of our little system twinkle the fixed stars, and beyond the remotest of these are others as remote. We cannot picture infinite space, yet we behold it. Wireless telegraphy has given a hint how intelligence may embody itself in space without taking up space. The network of pipes under our cities is not as complicated as the network of messages and prayers flashing to and fro all the time above and beneath us. Yet the world is not crowded by them. But whether we can conceive or not the nature of the spiritual body, we may fall back on confidence in life as the great body-builder according to environment. Given a vital germ, life creates for it its appropriate body, whether in the *Globigerina* of the ocean-ooze, or the mountain-climbing goat, or the Arab of the Sahara, or the business-pressed Secretary of State. Body is everywhere the result of the two factors — life multiplied by environment. And there need be no fear that these will forget their trade in the world beyond death.

We come back then with fuller conviction

than before to the position we were maintaining earlier in the chapter, that the theory of corporate immortality fails because it does not preserve the individual, and therefore leaves its universal in incomplex, that is, inorganic existence, that is, in non-existence. And our fuller conviction extends also to our belief that absorption of the life of the universe does not mean loss of personality and absorption into the universe. If the individual is necessary to the universal, participation in the universal life cannot involve loss of individuality. The more elements of the universal the individual absorbs, the more inseparable will be his hold on infinite personality, since these elements are simply partial aspects of God.

Teleology, evolution, ontology, and metaphysics all seem to give, then, to the question we asked of them the same answer: that there is beyond death another life, or rather a continuation of this life, which man inherits not by the mere fact of his existence, but in so far as he partakes of the nature of God. We must recognize the probative worth of this evidence. It is

not demonstrative, though to many it seems sufficient. For a demonstration is that the opposite of which is absurd. Now it is conceivable consistently with mental sanity that the actual fact may be opposite to the conclusion here reached, and that there is an awful waste of man's highest powers, that the evolutionary series comes up to man and then breaks short off, that sharing the character of God does not involve sharing His nature, and that the infinite excludes rather than includes the finite. No one of these conclusions is logically inconsistent with itself. But, in the opinion of many persons, each one involves more than a logical absurdity — a disbelief in God, a disbelief in the reign of law, a disbelief in character, a disbelief in rationality. To accept these disbeliefs and trust the evidence of the senses and the logical understanding that death is the final end, is to such persons a greater strain on credence than to doubt such evidence and trust the moral, or, as they must regard it, the higher evidence. The point of practical union possible between the believer in immortality and the earnest unbe-

liever is for each to throw himself into the noblest life conceivable and welcome gladly its destiny, whether that destiny involves preservation of personal identity or not. "I hope," writes the Chartist leader, G. J. Holyoake, to William E. Gladstone, "I hope there is a future life. And if so, my not being sure of it will not prevent it. And I know of no better way of deserving it than by conscious service of humanity."

If immortality is true, we shall not concern ourselves greatly with the ordinary objects of earthly ambition; for there will be plenty of time for following legitimate ambitions hereafter. We shall not allow mere secular civilization to dominate us; for that would mean dwelling in a world other than the real world in which we are to dwell. We shall not worry despairingly over the evil and crimes and failures of this world; for we shall take to ourselves the Seer's comfort, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." The course of our actual life depends on whether we regard it

as an ephemeral affair, a little gleam of consciousness between two black abysses, or whether there is that in us which will surmount the barriers of space and time and escape corruption, and which therefore, having persistence, has already in the present dignity and value.

# Immortality as not Inherent but Possible

## V

# Immortality as not Inherent but Possible

WHAT we have been saying has indicated the possibility of immortality, but it has not shown its necessity; or, to put it otherwise, it has shown immortality as possible for Man but not as certain for any given man. Does it follow, because immortality is possible, that it is necessarily the fact? Many assume such to be the case. But possibility and actuality are by no means the same. It may be, so far as our philosophic consideration has indicated, that every man is by nature necessarily immortal; or it may be, while all have the seed of immortality, that this ripens to fruit in some men only.

It has been already pointed out that a stage in development was early reached when life, whether in the present or the future, came to be

regarded as conditioned on the presence of the Spirit of God.[1] This same thought was also shown in fuller stature in the Fourth Gospel and in St. Paul's Epistles.[2] It is the climactic gift of Christ that belief in Him carries with it life, union with Him constitutes life eternal.[3] That inward and spiritual connection with Christ which St. Paul calls "faith" necessarily involves permanence of life with Him.[4] One who dwells with Christ in spirit becomes like Him, and shares his prerogatives and destiny. In Christ's resurrection it was seen that a spiritual being is not affected by the death of the body. Spiritual life and eternal life are therefore the same.

But if union with Christ is the key to immortality, those who are not united to Him must be without it. Some of the thinkers of the first century, however, were oblivious to the key-thought of Christianity and its logic, and held

[1] P. 35.
[2] P. 60; p. 62.
[3] St. John xi. 25, 26; xvii. 2, 3.
[4] Rom. vi. 3–6.

that there would be a resurrection not only of the righteous but also of the wicked. Both views — a resurrection for the righteous only, and for the righteous and the wicked — had been current in Judaism. But the Jewish theology had been concerned not so much with the destiny of the individual after death as with the problem of retribution. Those who were not punished here for their evil deeds must yet be punished, and there must be therefore a resurrection for the unjust as well as for the just.[1] And so both these views — that the resurrection was, on the one hand, for the righteous only, and, on the other hand, for both righteous and wicked — were current in the second and first centuries B. C.[2] The former fixed its gaze on the nature of life, as possible

[1] Dan. xii. 2.

[2] For a resurrection of the righteous only, cf. Eth. Enoch xc. 33, 38; xcviii. 3; xcix. 11; ciii. 7, 8; 2 Macc. vii. 14; Wisd. v. 14, 15; Book of Jubilees xxiii. 31.

For a resurrection of both righteous and wicked, cf. Eth. Enoch li. 1, 2; lxi. 5, 8; 4 Ezra vii. 32, 37, 80 f.; Apoc. of Baruch xlix–li. (The last two books are of the first century A. D.)

Eth. Enoch xxii. 9–14 is doubtful.

only through union with God; the latter, on the necessity of retribution. This, the more distinctively Jewish view, still dominated the minds of some in the Christian Church in the first century, and finds direct expression in three passages of the New Testament.[1] Whether these passages express the views of St. John and St. Paul is at present of no importance. They bear witness to the existence in the Christian Church of the first century of a belief in the resurrection of all men, just and unjust.

On the other hand, the two great streams of New Testament thought, that of St. Paul and that ascribed to St. John, are fundamentally opposed to this view; for in both of them per-

[1] St. John v. 28, 29: this passage is so entirely contradictory to the eschatology of the rest of the Fourth Gospel and out of accord with the context that it is probably an interpolation (cf. p. 62, n. 2). Acts xxiv. 15: the view here ascribed to St. Paul is opposed to that contained in his Epistles. Rev. xx. 12, 15: this is entirely in harmony with the Jewish tone of the Apocalypse. There are other passages in which the resurrection of the wicked is implied but where this is incidental to retribution; as, e. g. St. Matt. xxv. 31 f; Rom. ii. 5–10. Apart from such passages these three are the only ones, I believe, which directly assert a resurrection of the wicked.

manence of existence is regarded as belonging only to life that is spiritual, and as possible, therefore, to those only who are "in Christ," or who "believe that Jesus is the Son of God." According to the first and second Evangelists also those who rise from the dead are "as the angels of God," [1] that is, they are sharers in the Divine nature. This view is strengthened by St. Luke's expression in the parallel passage.[2] He speaks of those who are accounted "worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead"; there being then evidently some who do not obtain any resurrection. Similarly the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews praises the martyrs who refused deliverance, "that they might obtain a better resurrection" [3]; which therefore, was not to be had without endeavor. The best thought of the New Testament establishes the resurrection of the believer upon the same ground as the resurrection of Christ, that is, upon fellowship with Him in spiritual character. "To share in the resurrection, accord-

[1] St. Matt. xxii. 30; St. Mark xii. 25.
[2] St. Luke xx. 35. [3] Heb. xi. 35.

ing to all but the universal teaching of the New Testament, is the privilege only of those who are spiritually one with Christ and quickened by the Holy Spirit."[1] This line of New Testament thought finds expression later in the post-apostolic age in "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles:" "Then shall appear the signs of truth. First, the sign of an opening in the sky; then the sign of a trumpet's voice; and third, a resurrection of the dead; not of all, but as it hath been said, 'The Lord will arise and all the Saints with Him.'"[2]

It is to be noticed, in connection with this, that the phrase, "immortality of the soul," which we commonly use in speaking of future human destiny, never occurs in the Bible.[3] This is because the thought of the soul as being by nature immortal is an unscriptural one. The primitive Hebrews indeed, as we have seen,

[1] Prof. R. H. Charles, D.D.: "A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life," p. 386, n.

[2] Chap. xvi.

[3] Though the word "immortality" is used four times for the deathliness which is possible to be acquired: 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54; Rom. ii. 7; 2 Tim. i. 10.

regarded the dead as having a certain existence, but as shades, almost lifeless, without effort, will, or desire. The condition was wholly different from that conveyed to our minds by the phrase, "immortality of the soul"; for hereby we ordinarily understand that the soul is to be endowed hereafter with its full powers, and this necessarily and inherently. But such a conception nowhere appears in the New Testament. According to its psychology man is a tripartite being, consisting of flesh (σάρξ), soul or natural life (ψυχή), and spirit (πνεῦμα). His natural life he shares with the animals. It is given to him and to them directly by God. He breathed into the body of the first man, who then became a living soul,[1] and the turn of His hand takes away life or imparts it.[2] But if merely natural life was thus closely dependent on God, much more was spiritual life. Yet this could not, like natural life, be directly conveyed to man without co-operation on his part. Even in the Old Testament, with its incompletely developed psychology, this was

[1] Gen. ii. 7. [2] Ps. civ. 28–31.

recognized; for, as has been already indicated, the higher view and that of the majority of Jewish theologians was that it was only the righteous who shared in the resurrection. But St. Paul draws a sharp line between the man whose interests are worldly — sensual, social, intellectual — and the one who lives in that other world, not necessarily of the future but present in life under all conditions, the world whose realities are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control.[1] The former is ψυχικός, a merely natural man; the latter is πνευματικός, a spiritual man. The former is outside the world in which the latter lives, for the ability to enter it has never been developed in him.[2] However pious the former may claim to be, if he has not "the spirit," he is worldly, that is, belonging to the merely temporary, present order of things.[3] The spirit alone can bring that which alone is worthy of being called life;[4] and this spirit

[1] Gal. v. 22, 23. [2] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

[3] οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ ἀποδιορίζοντες, ψυχικοί, πνεῦμα μὴ ἔχοντες. Jude xix.

[4] Τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ ζωοποιοῦν. St. John vi. 63.

has its birth in man through union with Christ.[1]

The Bible then, and more especially the New Testament, knows nothing of an immortality for man in the sense of a full existence indefinitely prolonged, which is his inherently and necessarily. Permanent or eternal life is the same as spiritual life, and spiritual life some men have and others have not. Yet it is not an arbitrary assignment of God, but is open to every man. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."[2] And yet it is undoubtedly the case that the doctrine of inherent immortality is commonly regarded as belonging essentially to Christianity. But so far is this from the fact, that for more than two centuries this doctrine was either unknown in the Christian Church or was rejected by it as essentially heathen.

For example, Justin Martyr in the middle of the second century says: "To live is not its [the soul's] attribute, as it is God's. But as a man does not live always, and the soul is not

[1] St. John iii. 6; vi. 53, 54. [2] Rev. xxii. 17.

forever joined to the body, since whenever this harmony must be broken up, the soul leaves the body and the man exists no longer; even so, whenever the body must cease to exist, the spirit of life is removed from it and there is no more soul, but it goes back to the place from whence it was taken." [1] Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch in the second century, speaks even more clearly: "Was man by nature mortal? Certainly not. Was he then immortal? Neither do we affirm this. But one will say, 'Was he then nothing?' Not even this hits the mark. He was by nature neither mortal nor immortal. For if He had made him immortal from the beginning, He would have made him God. Again, if He had made him mortal, God would seem to have been the cause of his death. Neither then immortal nor yet mortal did He make him, but, as we have said above, capable of both; so that if he should incline to the things of immortality, keeping the commandment of God, he should receive as reward from Him immortality and should become God; but

[1] *Dial. with Trypho*, ch. vi.

if, on the other hand, he should turn to the things of death, disobeying God, he should himself be the cause of death to himself." [1] Tatian, in the same century, in the book which made him famous, asserted plainly the mortality of the soul by nature and its acquisition of immortality,[2] a view which, if it had been unorthodox, would have been immediately criticised. Clement of Alexandria, at the close of the second century, says: "When baptized, we become enlightened; enlightened, we become sons; as sons we become perfect and immortal." [3]

But by the end of the second century Greek thought began to penetrate Christianity, and to bring with it that view of the soul which for five centuries had been current in it. It was a prominent feature of the teaching of Plato that the soul is deathless and will exist in happiness or misery for endless ages.[4] The Mys-

[1] *Ad Antolycum*, ii. 27.

[2] Οὐκ ἔστιν ἀθάνατος, ἄνδρες Ἕλληνες, ἡ ψυχὴ καθ' ἑαυτήν, θνητὴ δὲ. Ἀλλὰ δύναται ἡ αὐτὴ καὶ μὴ ἀποθνήσκειν. — *Ad Graecos*, 13.

[3] *Paed*, I. iii. 6.

[4] In the *Phaedo* the phrase, "the soul is immortal," occurs twenty times.

teries, especially the Eleusinian, concerned themselves largely with the future life; and although there is no direct evidence as to the nature of the doctrine of immortality which was implied in their teaching, it seems probable that they agreed with Platonism in holding to a natural immortality; the advantage of the Mysteries being that, according to them, the future became for the initiated one of bliss instead of misery.[1] However this may be, at the Christian Era the Platonic idea of the soul as in its nature immortal was prominent in the religious thought of the Greek and Roman world. Perhaps its first appearance in the

[1] "Thrice happy they who go to the world below having seen these Mysteries. To them alone is life there; to all others is misery." — SOPHOCLES, *Frag.* 719, ed. Dind.

"It is there that man, having become perfect and initiated, restored to liberty, really master of himself, celebrates, crowned with myrtle, the most august mysteries, holds converse with just and pure souls, looking down upon the impure multitude of the profane or uninitiated, sinking in the mire and mist beneath him, through fear of death and disbelief in the life to come, abiding in its miseries." — PLUTARCH, *Frag.* ap. Stob. *Florileg.*, 120.

Cf. also *Homeric Hymn*, l. 480; Sopater Diaer. Zetem., p. 120 in Walz, "Rhet. Graec."

Christian Church is in a book of Athenagoras, "The Resurrection of the Dead." He was an Athenian philosopher who became a Christian in the latter part of the second century; and he speaks of man as possessing "an immortal soul," "an immortal nature," and of the soul as "incorruptible."[1] The two streams of thought can be seen flowing side by side, at about the same period, in Irenæus, who says in one place, "Life does not arise from us nor from our own nature, but is bestowed according to the grace of God";[2] and in another place of the same book, he speaks of the soul as one of the things "which are by nature immortal, and to which it belongs by their own nature to live."[3] From this time onward Christian opinion comes to be more and more influenced by Greek thought in this direction. Tertullian, in the early part of the third century, expressly declares that his view is that of Plato. "I will use therefore the opinion of a

[1] Chaps. xiii., xxiii., xx.
[2] *Contra Haer.*, Bk. II., xxxiv. 3.
[3] Bk. V., iv. 1.

Plato, when asserting that every soul is immortal."[1] "It belongs to firm faith to say with Plato that the soul is simple, that is, uniform in substance."[2] Yet Ephrem Syrus, who was born in the early part of the fourth century, says that the Immortal came down to mortals, and after He had made them immortal, He ascended again to the Father.[3] The same thought — that Christ endowed that which was naturally mortal with immortality — was expressed in the same century by Athanasius;[4] and again by Lactantius, who says that we receive one kind of life by birth, but the other kind, that which is perpetual, we gain only by endeavor, so that man might not reach immortality without effort.[5] Arnobius,

[1] *De. Resur. Carn.*, iii. [2] *De Anima*, iv.

[3] Ὁ ἀθάνατος πρὸς τοὺς θνητοὺς κατῆλθε, καὶ ποιήσας αὐτοὺς ἀθανάτους ἀνέβη πάλιν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα. (Oxford ed., p. 190.)

[4] Ἐνεδύσατο (Χριστὸς) τὸ θνητὸν, ἵνα τὸ θνητὸν ἐνδύσηται τὴν ἀθανασίαν καὶ τέλος γέγονεν ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἀπέθανεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς οἱ ὡς ἄνθρωποι ἀποθνήσκοντες θεοποιήθωμεν. (Ed. C. 1686, I. 1008.)

[5] Duae vitae homini attributae sunt, una temporalis quae corpori assignatur, altera sempiterna, quae animae

who is said to have been the teacher of Lactantius, regarded the idea of the soul's natural immortality as innovating and absurd. "Wherefore there is nothing that should mislead us, nothing that should hold out to us vain hopes; as is said by some men till now unheard of and carried away by an extravagant opinion of themselves, that souls are immortal, next in point of rank to the God and Ruler of the world. . . . But if men either knew themselves thoroughly or had the slightest knowledge of God, they would never claim as their own a Divine and immortal nature." [1] He goes even further than this, and holds that a belief in the soul's immortality as a native endowment would tend to remove moral restraint and have a prejudicial effect on human life. But the contrary opinion received support so powerful that it overcame all opposition and estab-

subjacet. Illam nascendo accipimus, hanc assequimur laborando, ne immortalitas homini sine ulla difficultate constaret. . . . Quae ratio ostendit, mortalem nasci hominem postea vero immortalem fieri cum coeperit ex Deo vivere. L. vii. 5.

[1] *Adversus Gentes*, II. 15, 19.

lished itself as an integral part of the Christian system. For in the beginning of the fifth century Augustine, who was an admirer of Plato, built his doctrine of the future punishment of sin on the premises that the soul is in itself immortal; and the moulding power which Augustinianism exercised over Christian theology for more than a thousand years carried deep into it a belief in the natural immortality of the soul and embedded it there.

There was apparently no part of the Christian belief which took such strong hold on the imagination of His immediate followers as that of the visible and speedy coming of the Lord, the establishment of His kingdom, and the end of the world. It was to them what the conviction of the superiority of good over evil is to us, the centre of their faith, the source of their consolation and courage. Many centuries have shown the spiritual character of a belief in which, to those who held it first, there was no separation between spiritual and material. And so it has come to pass that while to us the life of Christ marks the beginning of an era,

to the early Christians it marked the end of one.[1] This expectation of a speedy end of all things throws light upon several sides of the life of the Church in the Apostolic Age — the antinomianism into which some of the Christian communities fell;[2] the lack of care to preserve any records contemporary with the first days of the Christian movement; the absence of a systematized body of doctrine; and the presence of only the most rudimentary forms of ecclesiastical organization. System would have required in all departments time and thought, and these were prohibited and rendered needless by the approaching end of the age. It was not until the fathers were falling asleep, and the Church had begun to recognize that it must adjust itself to a world which for a time at least was to continue, that attempts were made to preserve in written form the history of the first days of Christianity, and to give to the Christian society that

[1] On this belief as appearing in the Book of the Revelation, cf. Frederic Palmer: "The Drama of the Apocalypse," p. 5 f.

[2] 2 Thess. iii. 6–13; ii. 1–3.

compactness of organization which was necessary to enable it to stand in the world.

This also tends to explain why the kingdom of heaven or of God,[1] which was so prominent in the thought of Jesus, took a subordinate place in the mind of the Church in the apostolic age. It had become merged in the coming of Christ. Another aspect of this which then stood out most vividly was not so much His victorious reign, as the triumph of His renewed appearance and the judgment He would inaugurate.

It is interesting to speculate what would have been the result if Christianity had trusted wholly for making its way in the world to its inward forces, its power of comforting, inspiring, presenting fresh truth, revealing God to the soul. It might have died without direct

[1] The latter form was perhaps the earlier (cf. Prof. Geo. H. Gilbert, "The Revelation of Jesus," p. 32, n.). The former may have originated in the Jewish avoidance of the use of the name of God. This led to paraphrases and substitutions, of which this phrase is probably one. That it occurs in the Gospel of St. Matthew only may be connected with the fact that this Gospel was intended especially for Jewish-Christians.

results, as did the movements of Hus in Bohemia and Savonarola in Italy. It adopted, however, a different policy. It fortified itself with material agencies — a strongly knit hierarchy of officers, a body of dogma, ceremonies taking in charge the chief situations in life. It was thus enabled to make without shipwreck the transition from the old world to the new, and in the new to find itself, outwardly at least, master. The modern world owes to ecclesiasticism an immense debt for preserving from the wreck of the old world literature, art, religion, and family life. But the price paid for the service was heavy, for it consisted in identifying the kingdom of Christ with conditions which were outward and material rather than inward and spiritual. "*Victi victoribus leges dederunt.*"

It was during the second, third, and fourth centuries that organization was developing within the Church a body of orthodox doctrine, establishing itself firmly, and adjusting the Church to the world. But this did not go on without protest. In the middle of the second

century a passionate voice, that of Montanus, was raised among the mountains of Phrygia, which soon drew many zealous Christians within hearing. For two hundred years Montanism insisted that a direct and authentic relation to God through the spirit was the privilege of every Christian, and that since the essence of religion was thus inward, all adoption of worldly agencies was un-Christian. It was, on its best side, an attempt to preserve the spiritual tone of primitive Christianity and to prevent the Church from settling down comfortably in conformity with the world.

Together with this opposition to the growing tendency towards organization, which it regarded as mechanical, Montanism held strongly to that belief of the apostolic church in the second coming of Christ, to which we have referred — the belief that Christ would soon return to earth, would judge all men, and would set up on earth a kingdom of His saints. This had been at first the necessary Christian form of the Jewish doctrine of the Messianic kingdom. It had originally been supposed

that the Messiah's rule would be forever.[1] But it was felt that a distinction should be drawn between the dominion of the Messiah and the final appearance of God among His people.[2] A Hebrew poet had declared that a day of the Lord was as a thousand years.[3] So this period became fixed in the popular mind as the duration of the Messiah's kingdom;[4] and the many Jewish apocalypses which appeared in the two centuries before and the century after the Christian era, were filled with descriptions of the signs of the advent of the kingdom and the blessings, realistically described, of those who would share in it. The Christian writers of the first and second centuries fell heir to this eschatology. While the authors of the New Testament handled it more soberly and with less insistence on detail than their predecessors, those who followed them were less cautious. After the time of the unsuccessful revolt against Hadrian (135 A. D.), the Jews lost hope in the speedy appearance of the Messianic kingdom

[1] St. John xii. 34.
[2] 1 Cor. xv. 24.
[3] Ps. xc. 4.
[4] Rev. xx. 4–8.

and devoted themselves more sedulously to the development of the law. But the Christians, more especially the Gentile Christians, accepted the Jewish apocalypses as sacred and authoritative literature, and these became part of the property of Christianity. Chiliasm, as it was then, or millenarianism as it was afterwards called, from the thousand-year period of its duration, came to be an acknowledged part of Christian orthodoxy, though there were those who did not accept it.[1]

But the longer the world continued without the catastrophe which was to usher in the millennial kingdom, the more those who were sober and spiritually minded questioned whether it was ever to take place. The pictures of it seemed crude and out of harmony with the mind of Christ. The expectation of it was in conflict with that compact establishment of organization and creed which conflicts against the state without and heretics within were forcing upon the Church for her self-preservation. By the end of the second

[1] Cf. Justin, *Dial. Trypho*, 80.

century chiliastic views came to be denounced as Jewish and therefore un-Christian. The rise of the Alexandrine theology, too, brought about a reinterpretation of Christian doctrine; so that in the Greek Church of the third and fourth centuries chiliasm was condemned and found only occasionally champions of prominence.

Montanus was one of these. To him, as to many a zealous conservative, giving up a detail however small and external, seemed giving up Christianity. The expectation of the coming of Christ at any moment, and the material nature of the blessedness He was to bring, were also in keeping with the tone of mind which claimed immediate inspiration for itself. He therefore proclaimed chiliasm with all its literalness and immediacy. He introduced one significant variation. He declared that Pepuza, his own city in Asia Minor, was to be the locality of the advent and the site of the millennial kingdom instead of Jerusalem. "Modifications of this kind, which have often appeared in later times in connection with the

revival of millenarianism, are a striking evidence of the tendency of every sect to regard its own little membership as the centre of the world, and its fortunes as the kernel of universal history." [1]

The claim to lofty spirituality has always brought perilously near the temptation to fleshliness, and Montanism was no exception. Its leaders fell into immorality. Its alliance with chiliasm was discredited by the continual existence of the world. Inspiration and prophecy in the Christian community were displaced by dogmatic theology and organization. In making each individual a sufficient source of revelation it threw away that appeal to the Christian consciousness as a whole which is the only barrier against blind individualism and antinomianism. From the outset it was doomed to failure. By the beginning of the fifth century the Church had become heir to the position and power of the state. And in 426 A. D. Augustine in his "De Civitate Dei" expressed the conviction which had been grow-

[1] Prof. A. Harnack: Art. "*Millennium*," Encyc. Brit.

ing, that the millennial kingdom had begun with the appearance of Jesus, that it was continued and embodied in the Catholic Church, and that those only were citizens of it who were members of that Church and were stamped by a Divine decree of predestination. Montanism has found many successors throughout the ages to utter portions of its message. In almost every century some loud protest has been raised — by Franciscan, Lollard, Anabaptist — against a secularized Church in the interest of a profound conception of Christ's kingdom. In modern times Quakerism has insisted on its doctrine of immediate inspiration through the inner light. Methodism has repeated its identification of spiritual life with the emotional consciousness of such life. The Catholic Apostolic Church — that of the Irvingites — revived its speaking with tongues as a witness to the possession of the spirit. Its conviction of the near end of the world has reappeared again and again with disastrous results. The latest prominent instance in the United States was in the prediction by William Miller of the

coming of Christ in 1843; which, when disproved by the event, led to the formation of the Church of the Second Adventists.

The expectation of an ideal state of society has thus, as we have seen, passed through several stages of development. With the earlier Hebrew prophets it had been a vision of a kingdom of God. For the Jewish Church in the centuries preceding the Christian era this meant the kingdom of the Messiah. The Christian Church of the first two centuries transformed this into the Parousia, the return of their Master Jesus. When the passing of the years showed the futility of this expectation, Augustine identified the kingdom of Christ on earth with the Church. The form of eschatology which ensued lasted with but little change until long after the Renaissance. Men no longer looked for Jesus to appear in the sky, but thought of Him as sitting above it, enjoying His glory and awaiting the Day of Judgment. The Church had asserted that the millennial reign of the Messiah began with the Christian era. Since it was to last a thousand

years, it might be expected then to end with the year 1000. Others dated the beginning of the millennium from the establishment of Christianity by Constantine in the fourth century as the religion of the state, and these fixed the end of the period in the fourteenth century. At both these dates, consequently, gloom and apprehension spread through Christendom, as men awaited the fulfillment of the times and the end of the world. On other occasions also the millennial note was sounded here and there by those who looked for the speedy coming on earth of a purified kingdom of Christ, and who pored over the apocalyptic parts of the Bible with firm faith and little intelligence. This expectation of the millennium was held by a branch of the Bohemian Brethren. Nicholas Storch learned it from them and taught it to Thomas Münzer, Hans Hut, and Melchior Hoffman, the leaders of the Zwickau Prophets, and it added fuel to the flames which burst out in the Peasants' War in 1525. But apart from these disturbances of belief here and there, men in the main turned their gaze away from

been attained, developed in the Roman Church into the doctrine of purgatory. It was first formulated by Gregory the Great († 604),[1] and was almost the only part of the received eschatology which was repudiated by the Reformers in the sixteenth century. Their objection to it was largely based on the evils which had grown up around it, through the belief that the stay of souls in purgatory could be alleviated and shortened by the sacrifices of the living on their behalf, through alms-deeds, prayers, masses, indulgences purchased for them. These corruptions were so identified by the Reformers with belief in purgatory itself that in their opposition they were led to take the ground that no change was possible after death, but that as one entered the next life so he remained forever. The Reformed theology, therefore, in this respect, laid a burden upon the believer which was imposed neither by Rome nor by the early Church; for while in both these there was hope after this life for the sinner, in

[1] "De quibusdam levibus culpis esse ante judicium purgatorius ignis credendus est."

the Protestant theology there was none. Loving hearts that yearned over their dear ones gone were forbidden to pray for them, since prayer could not affect those who had passed the line of death. And yet by a singular mental twist, logic was relaxed where need was least; though "the wicked" were allowed no change, the saved might make endless progress, from strength to strength and from glory to glory. It was not until modern thought had replaced the idea of resurrection with that of continuity of existence under the same laws of life as at present, that it became possible to separate what was valuable in the doctrine of purgatory from what was corrupt in it. Growth in both directions must be possible hereafter under the same conditions and with the same limitations as here. Prayers for those in that world must be just as valid as for those in this world. It has been the neglect of this truth that has given the doctrine of Purgatory its vitality, and undermined the prison in the next life which Protestant eschatology erected.

# The Doctrine of a Future State from the Fifth Century to the Nineteenth

## VI

# The Doctrine of a Future State from the Fifth Century to the Nineteenth

FROM the fifth century to the nineteenth there was little change in the general view of the hereafter. Heaven and hell were depicted by popular preachers in material forms and in the strongest colors. With some these statements were interpreted as symbols, material representations of spiritual realities. But by the majority they were accepted as literally true, and Heaven became an Oriental palace filled with pleasures. Yet even in these imaginings there is a far greater restraint than in the descriptions of the Mohammedan Paradise or the Norse Valhalla. The vision of God, the presence of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, are more central in them than

physical delights. A poet of the twelfth century sings of heaven thus:

"Me receptet Sion illa,
Sion, David urbs tranquilla;
Cujus faber auctor lucis,
Cujus portae lignum crucis,
Cujus claves lingua Petri,
Cujus cives semper laeti,
Cujus muri lapis vivus,
Cujus custos Rex festivus.
In hac urbe lux solennis,
Ver aeternum, pax perennis;
In hac odor implens caelos;
In hac semper festum melos.
Urbs celestis, urbs beata,
Super Petram collocata,
Urbs in portu satis tuto,
De longinquo te saluto;
Te saluto, te aspiro,
Te affecto, te requiro," [1]

Even where the poet allows himself to dwell on details with elaboration, these are free from the sensual element.

"Hierusalem! my happie Home!
When shall I come to thee?
When shall my sorrows have an end?
Thy joyes when shall I see?

[1] Hymn of St. Hildebert.

"In thee noe sicknesse may be seene,
Noe hurt, noe ache, noe sore;
There is noe death, nor ugly devill,
But Life for evermore.

"Thy houses are of yvorie,
Thy windows crystal cleare,
Thy tyles are made of beaten gold;
O God, that I were there!

"Thy gardens and thy gallant walkes
Continually are greene;
There growe such sweet and pleasant flowers
As noe where else are seene.

"There cinnamon, there sugar grows,
There nard and balm abound;
What tongue can telle or harte conceive
The ioys that there are found!

"Our Ladie sings *Magnificat*
With tone surpassing sweete,
And all the Virgins beare their parte
Sitting above her feete.

"Hierusalem! my happy home!
Would God I were in thee!
Would God my woes were at an end,
Thy joyes that I might see!" [1]

[1] From "*A Song*," probably about the beginning of the seventeenth century, by "F. B. P." (author unknown). For the whole of the hymn, twenty-six stanzas, in its original form, cf.: W. Garrett Horder: "The Hymn Lover," p. 81.

The danger of symbolism is that the symbol may either be taken for the reality and worshipped, or taken for the reality and rejected. When the depiction of heaven and hell in material terms came to be criticised by intelligence, not only was it rejected but heaven and hell themselves were believed to have no firmer basis in reality. It was especially the case that belief in hell declined; partly because men had a greater interest in disproving this, and partly because belief in natural immortality had erected future punishment to the position of chief importance in religion. The unending doom of the wicked loomed larger and more vivid than the unending bliss of the righteous. This may be owing to the fact that to natures of low moral development the infliction of pain seems the more important side of retribution, or it may be because heaven was reserved for a select few, and therefore the majority of mankind had no direct interest in it. In the great epic of the Middle Ages, Dante's "Divina Commedia," the "Purgatorio" and the "Inferno" overshadow in interest the "Paradiso." The chief mediæval

hymn, the "Dies Irae," is filled with shuddering apprehension, with awe and dread of the judgment which summons before it every human soul that has ever lived, and with fear of the fate impending.

"Quantus tremor est futurus
Quando Judex est venturus,
Cuncta stricte discussurus!

"Tuba minum spargens sonum
Per sepulchra regionum
Coget omnes ante thronum.

"Ingemisco tanquam reus;
Culpa rubet vultus meus.
Supplicanti parce, Deus!"

The functions of deity were redistributed. God became the stern Judge, insistent upon more than the uttermost farthing, while the kindly, helpful Divine attributes were embodied in the Virgin Mary, who became the real God of Christendom. The terms of the hereafter were modified by the thought that she, or some one of the saints, might intercede and mitigate them. But the field of action of religion

was wholly in the future. The expectation, unfulfilled, of Christ's millennial kingdom grew into a belief in a bodily resurrection in the vague morrow after death. The basis of this future life was not so much the present life as the assertions of ecclesiastics. The claim of the Church to hold the keys of heaven and hell had no verification in processes operative in the present. This, of course, led many then, as it leads many now, to challenge boldly the power of the Church to dispose of future destiny, and to take for themselves the chances of the hereafter. Others did not dispute the claim to dispense heaven and hell, but found the ecclesiastical heaven so little to their liking as to accept cheerfully the alternative assigned them. "In Paradise what have I to win?" says a hero of mediæval romance. "Therein I seek not to enter, but only to have my sweet lady that I love so well. For into Paradise go none but such folk as I shall tell thee now: thither go these same old priests, and halt old men and maimed, who all day and night cower continually before the altars and in the crypts, and such folk as

wear old amices and old clouted frocks, and naked folk and shoeless and covered with sores, perishing of hunger and thirst and of cold and of little ease. These be they that go into Paradise. With them have I nought to make. But into Hell would I fain go. For into Hell fare goodly clerks, and goodly knights that fall in tourneys and great wars, and stout men-at-arms, and all men noble. With these would I liefly go. And thither pass the sweet ladies and courteous that have two lovers or three and their lords also thereto. Thither goes the gold and the silver and cloth of vair and cloth of gris and harpers and makers and the prince of the world. With these I would gladly go, let me but have with me Nicolete, my sweetest lady." [1]

The awakening, after the Protestant Reformation, of personal religion, as it was called, religion which contemplated the saving of the individual soul, gave strong emphasis to the vivid depiction of both worlds hereafter and an

[1] "Aucassin and Nicolette." Tr. by Andrew Lang. Roycroft ed., p. 32.

intensity of interest to the question, "Which awaits me?" Charles Wesley, as he stood on a narrow isthmus in Cornwall, was stirred to write,

"Lo, on a narrow neck of land
'Twixt two unbounded seas I stand,
Secure, insensible!
A point of time, a moment's space,
Removes me to yon heavenly place,
Or shuts me up in hell."

The note of dread, which in the "Dies Irae" has a certain simple and strong dignity, in Isaac Watts has a sound of unreality, professed, as it is, for others and in contemplation of a fate from which he himself has nothing to fear.

"My thoughts on awful subjects roll —
Damnation and the dead.
What horrors seize a guilty soul,
Upon her dying bed!

. . . . . .

"Then swift and dreadful she descends
Down to the fiery coasts
Amongst abominable fiends,
Herself a frighted ghost.

"There endless crowds of sinners lie,
And darkness makes their chains.
Tortured with fierce despair they cry,
Yet wait for fiercer pains.

"Not all their anguish and their blood
For their old guilt atones,
Nor the compassion of a God
Shall hearken to their groans."

To this painter of mediæval eschatology the geography of heaven is as much a fact and as familiar as that of Surrey.

"Raise thee, my soul, fly up and run
Through every heavenly street;
And say, there 's nought below the sun
That 's worthy of thy feet.

"There on a high majestick throne
Th' Almighty Father reigns,
And sheds His glorious goodness down
On all the blissful plains.

"Bright, like the sun, the Saviour sits
And spreads eternal noon.
No evenings there or gloomy nights
To want the feeble moon.

"The glorious tenants of the place
Stand bending round the throne,
And saints and seraphs sing and praise
The infinite Three-One.

"Jesus, and when shall that dear day,
That joyful hour appear,
When I shall leave this house of clay
To dwell amongst 'em there?"

Throughout the centuries during which the view of man as inherently immortal dominated Christendom, certain objections to it were more or less vaguely felt, which in the nineteenth century began to find fuller expression. The doctrine which declared man imperishable and yet predicted for him unending torments of fire, never explained how he could become capable of enduring such fire without perishing. To the objection that fire would destroy in a few minutes any body conceivable, it could only reply that omnipotence could undoubtedly make a body which would endure fire and suffer forever. Or if it replied that the pains were spiritual, it was met by the question, how could material fire produce spiritual pains? The cause must operate in the same plane as the effect — either both fire and torment must be material or they must both be spiritual. In the latter case, the material terms must be frankly recognized as symbolic and educational, though they might none the less on that account embody a reality. Yet the reality would be quite different from the result in the former

case, since that would consist of conditions imposed upon the soul from without, while in the latter both cause and effect would be within the soul itself.

In this inherited scheme of the future, retribution dominated eschatology, and the announcement of the retribution was based on assertion. The rewards and punishments which it predicted were for the next world and were wholly different from any visible in the present. The choirs of angels and the fiery torments were based solely on the authority of the Church, or, with Protestants, on the authority of certain texts of the Bible. Men began to question whether matters of such vital importance could stand on so slender a basis. What if the authoritative voice were mistaken? What if the exegesis were incorrect? Must the key to human destiny be in the hands of a few ecclesiastics or scholars? must not their assertions be verifiable? or at least must there not be laws of life already in operation tending to bring about the results asserted? But the kind of life after death promised by the popular

theology had no necessary connection with the processes of the present life. Even granting the fact of life hereafter — and this was inevitable, on the assumption that the soul was by nature immortal — the destiny awaiting each individual must be uncertain until he awoke and stood face to face with it. The saint shuddered to think that after all he might not be one of the elect but might find himself cast out from the presence of God, and the sinner thought there was a very good chance that the religious people might not know all they claimed and that things would turn out not so badly for him after all. The future was full of surprises, which it was impossible to forecast. Everything depended on the unrelated will of God, and will unrelated to anything but itself must be arbitrary and impredicable. The result was that as the future was so different from the present, it came to be regarded as unreal, a fairyland, which one might believe in if he chose, but which laid no compulsive hand on belief, which was in no way necessary to the completion and the full understanding of the

present. The doctrine of inherent immortality, which would seem to establish a future after death for every one, tended therefore to destroy belief in immortality. By severing the character of the future from that of the present, it has driven men to decide which had in it most of reality; and they have not unnaturally chosen the one whose appeal was loudest and most familiar.

The view that the soul is of necessity immortal had another difficulty to meet. If among the multitude of souls forever in existence there is a vast number who are evil, the kingdom of God can never be fully established. The universe becomes forever dualistic. Evil is as real a power as good, and the contest between the two is an eternal one. The old Persian dualism then is true, and the world-process is a perpetual conflict between Ormazd and Ahriman. This is giving the devil a lease of life and power equal to those of God. But unless there are thus two Gods of opposite characters, either good or evil must be finally dominant. For the Christian, good is by its

nature that which persists, which *is*, which is real; and there can therefore be no question in regard to good and evil, which of the two is ultimate and dominant. If then evil ceases, it must be by evil persons ceasing to exist, for evil has no existence as a thing apart from personality. How this cessation takes place, whether by a Divine fiat of annihilation from without or by a self-returning process from within, or whether these two are the same — these are questions remaining to be considered. The point to which we are now calling attention is that if the soul is inherently immortal, the kingdom of the devil has a permanent foundation and becomes equal to that of God.

An attempt is made to avoid this dualism by making God lord of the devil and the author of evil, in such wise that, for some unknown reason, evil is permitted a share of sway, though the power of God is not held by it in real subordination. Complete dominance might at any moment be resumed, and sin abolished. But this hypothesis, in this form, vacates God's kingdom as truly as the other. For if He could

at once put an end to evil but will not, He is a being whom no upright man could revere. The case, however, would be somewhat different if evil is tolerated not through friendly permission but through an impossibility in the nature of the case of preventing or destroying it immediately. To bestow upon man moral freedom without including the liberty to sin, would seem to be as impossible as to make a square circle or a shadow without light. If, then, evil is a condition necessary to the development of good, God may be regarded as not in league with the devil, as He must be if evil is created or permitted arbitrarily and unnecessarily. If the development of countless personalities similar to God is the far-off end towards which creation moves; if the free choice of good is a necessary condition in such development, and the possible choice of evil is necessary to the choice of good; then evil becomes an incident in the process of human evolution. Being an incident in the process rather than of the end to be attained, it must drop away in proportion as the end is reached.

But, granting that evil is necessary in the present system of evolution, if it be asked why omnipotence did not create a system which should secure the desired end without the present attendant loss — the existence of evil — it may be a sufficient answer that to perform that which in the nature of things is impossible does not belong even to omnipotence. To make a round triangle is, so far as we can see, not in the power even of God; and to create a world which should include choice and yet exclude evil would seem equally impossible.

Another objection to the perpetual existence of beings in a state of misery is that it would be contrary to the loving-kindness of God. Love is the finding of another necessary to oneself. It was apparently this characteristic which led to the creation of the world — that there might be expression of the complexity and harmony of relationship of the Divine nature. But to find the misery of others necessary to oneself is characteristic only of a nature that is not loving but cruel. Holy love can find its completion only in the complete happiness, that is,

the holiness, of others. When then the Divine kingdom is fully established, God must be "all in all," that is, there must be no beings in the universe out of harmony with Him. However this result is to be reached, whether by the conversion of all, or by the sudden annihilation of opponents through a dramatic catastrophe, or their gradual elimination through the law of decay, the felicitous result must be in some way attained if God's love is to be satisfied. The mediæval depictions of hell are symbolic, for they have a reality underlying them set forth in material terms. But the pictures of God and the saints looking down over the walls of heaven in complacency at the torments of the damned, have no reality behind them. They are not only untruths but falsities.

The attribution of immortality to the soul as a natural and necessary endowment leads to an inference backward as well as forward. If existence belongs to the soul inherently, if it is to exist after this life, must it not have existed before it? If its non-existence in the future is inconceivable, is not also its non-

existence in the past? This assumes, however, that the soul is other than the personality of the individual; that it is a separate entity within him, which may be conceived therefore as existing without and apart from him. But the view we have been taking is that the soul is the personality, and that this is acquired by development. When water passes below 32° in temperature, a new substance, ice, comes into being. When a male and a female germ unite, organic life begins. Why the new thing appears in the result we do not in either case know. We only know that such is the law of nature or the creative fiat of God, whichever we may call it. But we acknowledge in such cases an actual beginning. We do not suppose it necessary to assume that the young animal had existed somewhere previously, and was now only called forth from its hiding-place. At a certain stage consciousness is developed, again at a further stage self-consciousness, and still again what we may call other-consciousness — the recognition of oneself as incomplete without others and the

finding of oneself in them. St. Paul, as we have said, distinguished these three stages as σαρκικός or "carnal," ψυχικός or "natural," and πνευματικός or "spiritual." It is only this last step which renders one independent of time and place, and therefore involves permanence of existence. If, as we have been maintaining, the soul is synonymous with spiritual life and is something to be acquired in addition to natural life, there would seem no place for pre-existence.

But may it not be that the germ, having once become a living soul and passed through death, may undergo a reincarnation? May it not be born again age after age in successive bodies? Undoubtedly it may, if by this is meant that it will pass through many stages of experience diverse from one another, and that in all these it will have some embodiment and will remain itself. It is impossible to conceive pure spirit existing without limitations and means of self-expression. Consequently body of some kind would seem necessary to soul. We are right, therefore, in using the article in the Apostles'

Creed — "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting" — to express our confidence in the persistence of full embodied personal identity. If then reincarnation declares that personal existence is a string of beads, we may assent, provided we are assured that through them all runs one and the self-same string. But if I am told that my soul was formerly that of a wolf and will be hereafter that of some other man, whether a Caliban or a Shakespeare, I ask what evidence is there that it will be I? However many stages I have passed through since my birth as the human being I at present am, I have kept unshaken through them all my sense of personal identity. If in some previous incarnation I have been a wolf, I have lost not only all my memory of it, but all sense of identity with that self. Whenever I see a self which does not waken in me this sense of identity, I consider it other than mine. This is the line of distinction between others and myself. I know, it is true, that this conviction of my own identity may be impaired. I may imagine that I am a chicken

or two persons. But the voices of both common opinion and of science declare that then I am not even one person; I am insane or at least abnormal. Normal personality must keep this sense of identity, or without it break up. Any reincarnation, therefore, which does not guarantee this, we decline to believe in. Any which does, we are quite ready to accept; only we prefer to call it progressive development.

# Universalism and Retribution

## VII

# Universalism and Retribution

THE objections to the popular doctrine of immortality mentioned in the previous chapter began, as we have said, to find ampler expression in the first half of the nineteenth century. And this expression found an utterance in Universalism.

Universalism had its rise in the latter part of the eighteenth century,[1] but its voice was not widely heard until the early part of the nine-

[1] Though it has formed part of the message of various opponents here and there of the orthodox position. For example, Edwards in his "Gangræna, or Catalogue and Discovery of Errors, Heresies, and Blasphemies" (London, 1646), says that Mrs. Attaway, a Baptist, "the mistress of all the she-preachers in Coleman Street," "delivered many and dangerous doctrines: as (1) that it could not stand with the goodness of God to damn his own creations eternally. . . . (3) That there shall be a general restauration, wherein all men shall be reconciled and saved; and (4) that Christ died for all."

teenth.[1] It began as a protest against the Calvinistic theory of the Atonement. This theory, while asserting the depravity of all men through their union with Adam in his Fall, held that the Atonement made by Christ was for the elect only. James Relly in London in 1750 attracted much attention to the assertion, set forth in his preaching, that through union with Christ all men had part in the Atonement. Their redemption, though not their actual salvation, was complete. A convert to his views was John Murray, who came to America in

[1] The first General Convention of the Universalist Church was held at Winchester, New Hampshire, in 1803. It adopted the following creed:

"ART. I. We believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments contain a revelation of the character of God, and of the duty, interest, and final destination of mankind.

"ART. II. We believe that there is one God, whose nature is love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness.

"ART. III. We believe that holiness and true happiness are inseparably connected, and that believers ought to be careful to maintain order and practise good works, for these things are good and profitable unto men."

1770, attracted crowds by his preaching, established congregations in the Middle States and New England, and introduced his opinions among many orthodox congregations. The ground had been prepared for this by the wave of Arminianism which swept through the country in the eighteenth century. This movement declared, in opposition to Calvinism, that man has of himself ability to turn towards God, and magnified in general the rights and the dignity of humanity. Universalism, as the doctrine preached by Murray and by his successor, Hosea Ballou, came to be called, planted itself firmly upon the conviction that God is love, and took comfort in drawing therefrom the inference that the Divine love must ultimately triumph in the recovery and salvation of every human soul. It was a comfort not unneeded; for the severities of Calvinistic eschatology had been pressed home upon shrinking souls with unsparing rigidity. The so-called New England theology had been asking its splendid mystical question, "Are you willing to be damned for the glory of God?"

Descriptions of hell by popular preachers rivalled those drawn by mediæval monasticism. The literary sense was not sufficiently common to enable men to escape from literalness of interpretation, and yet hold to a reality of meaning. Hell-fire was literal fire, and it was apportioned hereafter to all but the elect.[1]

[1] This lurid atmosphere is so far from that of the present generation that it may be well to give one or two quotations in order to show the reality of belief in the physical pains of hell and its inclusion of unbaptized infants, in times not far from our own. Calvin continued in Protestantism the keynote which Augustinianism had sounded: "Atque ideo infantes quoque ipsi, dum suam secum damnationem a matris utero afferunt, non alieno, sed suo ipsorum vitio sunt obstricti. Nam tametsi suae iniquitatis fructus nondum protulerint, habent tamen in se inclusum semen: imo tota eorum natura, quoddam est peccati semen: ideo non odiosa et abominabilis Deo esse non potest. Unde sequitur, proprie coram Deo censeri peccatum quia non esset reatus absque culpa." — Inst. II. 1, 8.

"Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved." — Westminster Larger Catechism, x. 3.

"The fourth dungeon is the boiling kettle. Listen, there is a sound like that of a kettle boiling. Is it really a kettle which is boiling? No. Then what is it? Hear what it is. The blood is boiling in the scalded veins of that boy; the brain is boiling and bubbling in his head; the marrow is boiling in his bones. The fifth dungeon is the red-hot oven,

These conditions must be borne in mind in considering the welcome with which the gospel of Universalism was received. It is not necessary to account for its growth, as some of its opponents did, by asserting that it offered an

in which is a little child. Hear how it screams to come out; see how it turns and twists itself about in the fire! it beats its head against the roof of the oven. It stamps its little feet on the floor of the oven. To this child God was very good. Very likely God saw that this child would get worse and worse, and would never repent, and so would have to be punished much more in hell. So God in His mercy called it out of the world in its early childhood." — Quoted by Dr. J. F. Clarke, in "Orthodoxy, Its Truths and Errors," p. 360, from a Roman Catholic book by Rev. J. Furniss, published in England in the last century.

A gentleman told the present writer that in a sermon he heard when a student in Dartmouth College about 1830, the preacher pictured the fate which would overtake his hearers if unconverted. "You will sink in a lake of fire and brimstone, every nerve in torture, for ages and ages and ages. At last you will rise through ages and ages to the top. And as your head emerges, you will look off to the Great White Throne and cry out, 'Lord, how long?' And the answer will ring through the courts of heaven, 'Forever!' and you will begin sinking again to the depths." This sermon made an impression on him, the gentleman said, not at all because its teaching was unusual, for he heard many sermons of the same kind, but simply because its language was somewhat more vivid than that of others.

easy religion to those who desired to have none at all, but only the social repute of having one. It brought an immense relief to those who longed for a God they could respect, but who were repelled from the cruel Judge of Calvinism.

About the same time Universalism was attracting attention, another attack on New England orthodoxy was made by Unitarianism.[1] This movement, while taking the doctrine of the Trinity as its objective point, agreed with Universalism in its view of the Atonement, and to some extent with its doctrine of retribution. The two movements had so much in common that their attack on Calvinism was not double but single, and in the first half of the century they were hardly distinguished from one another in the popular mind.[2] One result of the attack was that New

[1] The first organization of ministers in New England claiming to be Unitarian took place in 1815.

[2] The difference between them was said by a witty Bostonian to be that the Universalist believes God is too good to damn him; the Unitarian believes he is too good for God to damn.

England orthodoxy, though still retaining its view of the Atonement as forensic, vicarious, substitutional, came to allow that it was universal in its scope; and in this respect the position of the earlier Universalists may be said to have been established.

Universalism had insisted that in the Divine nature it was involved that there was no obstacle on God's side to the full salvation of every man. The later Universalists, under Hosea Ballou, developed this into Restorationism — the belief that all men who have lived or who ever will live, will ultimately be restored and saved. But this substitution of purgatory for hell was based not upon a scientific deduction but upon a hope. Men, it is true, seemed here in some cases obdurate to the persuasions of righteousness, and in that obduracy they died. But on the other side of death new light would stream in on them and show them the error of their ways. Surely God would have there arguments strong enough to convince every one. Besides, it was not depravity which caused men to turn from

righteousness here, as New England orthodoxy asserted. It was rather their circumstances. Put them into different conditions, and the result would be different; they would become righteous. And so all hereafter will turn and be saved. This hope, however, did not take into account that though there might be no obstacle on God's side, there might be obstacles insuperable on man's side. It assumed that the barrier to human salvation was insufficiency of evidence, of light, of motive. In the next world things will be seen as they really are. The delusion that evil is good will, therefore, according to this theory, no longer persists, but all will see and turn and live.

Universalism was born before the scientific view of religion became common — the view that spiritual life here and hereafter is developed along lines operative and discernible at present. At the time of its birth almost all religious thought still based itself on some text of Scripture, which it regarded not so much as illustrative of an eternal fact as declarative of an ordinance. Universalism then had hardly

more inducement than its opponents to consider laws of life and their implications. With it as with its opponents sin was traced to Adam. But it neglected to see in the orthodox doctrine of depravity, crudely expressed and grounded in mythical history as it was, the symbol of a profound truth — that sin has its origin in man himself, not in his circumstances. What keeps him from righteousness is not, in the last resort, lack of light, of evidence, but disinclination to the thing, righteousness, itself. No amount of evidence will, for instance, convince a man destitute of the community-sense, that brotherliness is necessary to his own development. New light will undoubtedly result in many cases in new vision. But such is not necessarily the result; for light, that is, truth, appeals primarily to the understanding, while moral character must have as its foundation the affections and the will. It is this law to which Our Lord referred when He said that if the Jews believed not Moses and the prophets, neither would they believe though one rose from the dead.

Universalism then fell into the same error against which it protested. It denounced the God of orthodoxy for condemning a man to misery by putting him into a certain place. It proposed to change his misery to bliss by putting him into a different place. In both cases the condition was to be put upon him from without. The profound truth which orthodoxy held in the doctrines of original sin and depravity — that in so far as man is free he is capable of incurable disease of the will, withstanding the efforts of God himself — this Universalism did not see. Its protest against the literalism and cruelty of Calvinism brought a needed relief, and tended to affect in some degree the religious thought of England and America; though the modification of the theological rigors of a century ago has come far more from change in the general tone of the age than from the direct efforts of Universalism. But the theology of the movement was superficial and its effect trivial. Its fundamental principle, that there is no obstacle on God's side to the salvation of all men, is now every-

where accepted. Its secondary principle, that there is no such thing as loss, is now almost wholly rejected.[1]

The course of Christian thought then in regard to future retribution had been hitherto as follows: Men are morally of two kinds, the righteous and the wicked. As they must necessarily live forever, there must be good men and evil through all eternity. As the future is preeminently the world of retribution, the wicked, in full possession of consciousness and person-

[1] That there is really such a thing as loss is asserted, primarily not in the name of theology, but in that of modern philosophy, by Prof. William James: "Is all 'yes, yes' in the universe? Does n't the fact of 'no' stand at the very core of life? Does n't the very 'seriousness' that we attribute to life mean that ineluctable noes and losses form a part of it, that there are genuine sacrifices somewhere, and that something permanently drastic and bitter always remains at the bottom of its cup? . . . I find myself willing to take the universe to be really dangerous and adventurous, without therefore backing out and crying, 'no play.' I am willing that there should be real losses and real losers, and no total preservation of all that is. I can believe in the ideal as an ultimate, not as an origin, and as an extract, not the whole. When the cup is poured off, the dregs are left behind forever, but the possibility of what is poured off is sweet enough to accept." — "Pragmatism," pp. 295, 296.

ality, must suffer forever the torments of everlasting punishment. Here Universalism stepped in and said, that is impossible on account of the nature of God. His love can tolerate no such eternal breach in the universe. As the nature of God demands harmony with Him, and as the nature of man demands endless life, it must be that all men will be ultimately brought into harmony with God and so live with Him forever.

But now came a reawakening of the earlier Christian thought in protest against the stern doom pronounced upon the majority of men by Calvinism. One of its premises of that doom was questioned. Is it certain that man is by nature immortal? Does he necessarily continue to exist forever? Is not conscious existence forever in sin a contradiction in terms? What would happen if a sinner in hell should cry out, "My Father, I repent!" Is personality a fixture, or is it capable of being amplified or diminished? How is it affected by sin? If sin involves the diminution of personality, must not such diminution have an

end? If the man continues running down, where will he run to finally? If under the influence of sin he becomes gradually less and less, must he not ultimately come to zero? If to be in Christ constitutes life, does not to be out of Christ constitute death? And does death mean life in misery, or does it mean death, extinction of being?

Such questions as these had begun stirring in men's minds when Rev. Edward White, an English clergyman, published in 1846 his book, "Life in Christ." His main position was that those who were not in Christ could have no life and therefore must ultimately perish. The ground of his position was essentially that of the Universalists, except that while they took one horn of the dilemma — that the wicked would be ultimately restored, — he took the other — that they would be destroyed. He did not base his position on that of the early Church, for he had apparently little acquaintance with history, nor upon the nature of sin and man, for he had no interest in philosophy. His position was apparently the result

of a desire to find a way by which the wicked should be duly punished and yet the universe of being should be ultimately in full harmony with God. Theologians have been too often inclined to prophesy confidently in regard to the future without other justification than inference from doubtful exegesis. White's scheme was curiously unhistoric in its exegesis and unscientific in its nature. He held that through Adam's Fall man became mortal in soul as well as in body. Survival of death however becomes possible by a distinct act of the Divine will, God "deviating secretly from the ordinary course of nature so as to render it possible to recover the identical man from the dead, through the miracle of resurrection." [1] Believers in Christ receive in regeneration the principle of eternal life, which is essentially immortal. Sinners are, by the miracle just mentioned, kept alive till the final resurrection; after which they are tormented in a lake of fire until they have satisfied the claims of the Divine justice, when they are annihilated.[2] White's

[1] "Life in Christ," p. 69. [2] Ibid. p. 285.

position thus was based on the Deistic assumption of the eighteenth century, of an order of nature apart from God; on the view of the resurrection as an event in the far-distant future and of God's actions then as wholly different from what they are at present. His book therefore accomplished hardly more than to make him known as the father of modern Annihilationism and to bring the doctrine into disrepute with careful thinkers.[1]

The line of thought however which found utterance and gained impetus through White's book, grew during the nineteenth century,

[1] An earlier advocate in modern times of the view that immortality is not inherent in man by nature, was Henry Dodwell, who published in London, in 1706, a book with the following title: "An Epistolary discourse, proving from the Scriptures and the first fathers, that the Soul is a principle naturally mortal but immortalized actually by the Pleasure of God, to punishment or to reward by its union with the Divine baptismal spirit, — wherein is proved that none have the power of giving this divine immortalizing Spirit since the apostles but only the bishops."

So able a man as Rev. James Baldwin Brown combats in his book, "The Doctrine of Annihilation in the Light of the Gospel of Love," what he supposes are the views of believers in conditional immortality, but what in fact are only White's vagaries.

more especially in its last third. It agreed with the popular theology in holding that eternal loss is a reality, and that not all men finally attain eternal life. But while it thus shared the belief that some only attain salvation, its point of difference from the popular view was in regard to the fate of the others. What becomes of those who are not saved? The commonly received opinion was that they remain alive forever, in full possession of consciousness and personality, but in misery or acute torment, and this condition is unchangeable. The point at which fixity of condition is reached was somewhat uncertain. It was generally held to be at death.[1] The Roman Catholic

[1] John Newton's hymn ("Olney Hymns," 1779) expresses the view commonly held during the nineteenth century:

"While with ceaseless course the sun
Hasted through the former year,
Many souls their race have run,
Never more to meet us here.
Fixed in an eternal state,
They have done with all below;
We a little longer wait,
But how little none can know."

Church had made provision in its doctrine of purgatory for change after death, though this possibility was confined to those who were ultimately saved. But the Protestant Churches, in their abhorrence of the evils attendant on the doctrine of purgatory, swept it away altogether, and insisted that the soul attained final permanence at death. Those, however, who felt obliged to provide for an ultimate Day of Judgment and assign a function to it gave to it the settlement of the universe into its fixed condition, without feeling under logical obligation to declare what took place between death and this far-distant dramatic event.[1] But wherever the point of fixity was established, all men remained thereafter forever in the condition in which they then were. This meant

[1] Cf. Charles Wesley's hymn, already referred to (p. 172), "Lo, on a narrow neck of land":

"Before me place in bright array,
The pomp of that tremendous day,
When Thou with clouds shalt come
To judge the nations at Thy bar.
Oh, tell me, Lord, shall I be there
To meet a joyful doom?"

for the wicked an existence forever under Divine punishment. To avoid the injustice of punishing eternally sins which had been committed in the few years of this life, it was asserted that the sin itself would be eternal, a perpetual state of hostility against God. As long as there was sin, there must be punishment. Yet from this eternal sin the sinners were, on this hypothesis, incapable of turning.

It was in regard to this destiny of the lost that a difference of opinion now came to be felt. That there might be those who were lost was recognized as inevitable; but was their condition one of conscious existence forever in misery? Did not permanent existence in sin involve a contradiction in terms? Was it the case that the existence of the soul was one thing, and harmony with God was another, so that the two could be regarded as apart from each other? Was there any such thing as life apart from fellowship with God? Those who asked these questions turned to the Bible for answer. In the development of its thought upon eschatology, which we have already traced, they

found new light upon the nature of life and death which substantiated the conclusions drawn from the modern study of personality. The special blessing which Christ will bestow on those who belong to His kingdom is imperishable life.[1] He who keeps Christ's words shall never see death.[2] Not to have become one with Christ is to have no life.[3] Belief in Christ carries with it life everlasting, for He secures to His followers immunity from death because He is the principle of Life.[4] As it is the case that wherever love is there God is, since He not only is loving but is love itself,[5] so to know God and Christ not merely will bring eternal life but itself constitutes life eternal.[6] We are not to look to Christ to inaugurate a resurrection at some period in the distant future, for He is Himself the resurrection and the life.[7]

These utterances of the Fourth Gospel find, it was seen, their echo in the Pauline Epistles.

[1] St. John x. 28.
[2] Ibid. viii. 51.
[3] Ibid. vi. 53.
[4] Ibid. vi. 47, 48.
[5] 1 John iv. 7, 8.
[6] St. John xvii. 3.
[7] Ibid. xi. 24, 25.

Christ is not merely the historic being, Jesus of Nazareth. He is the ground of existence, wherever there is existence.[1] His follower becomes one with Him in all the stages of His experience — death, resurrection, permanence of life.[2] This inward and spiritual connection with Christ necessarily involves life, just as connection with Adam — the type of merely natural existence — necessarily involves death.[3] Those who know not God and obey not the Gospel of Christ "shall be punished with eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."[4] Resurrection, for St. Paul in his mature thought, consists not in coming up out of the grave, but in entering into perfect fellowship with Christ.[5]

The first Epistle of John also has as its centre the thought that belief in Christ, or union with Him, of itself constitutes life, and life moreover which is immortal. "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that

[1] Col. i. 17.
[2] Ibid. ii. 12, 13.
[3] 1 Cor. xv. 22.
[4] 2 Thess. i. 9.
[5] Phil. iii. 11, 12.

hath the Son hath life"; and the conclusion is emphasized negatively, by its opposite: "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life." [1] The author expressly states the announcement of this as the object of his Epistle: "This have I written that ye may know that ye," not shall have, but "have eternal life"; and he then adds a clause defining and restricting his hearers, "that is, to those of you who believe on the name of the Son of God." [2] He who loves his brother has in so doing already passed from death to life; while with him who does not love his brother it is not so much the case that he will be liable to a sentence of death in the future, but he has at present no life; he "abideth in death." [3] The only thing which gives permanence of life is doing the will of God; those who are identified with other interests "pass away." [4]

We have referred to these passages before. But their significance in this connection is that they make permanence of life to be not a

[1] 1 John v. 11, 12.
[2] Ibid. v. 13.
[3] Ibid. iii. 14.
[4] Ibid. ii. 15–18.

natural endowment but synonymous with keeping in touch with God, and death to be death, extinction of being, not perpetuity of existence in misery. This is not left as an inference but is expressly asserted. St. Paul's declaration that "the wages of sin is death" [1] is confirmed also by St. James's assertion that "sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death." [2] Again St. Paul reiterates that the end of the reign of sin is in death,[3] the end of those things of which a Christian is ashamed is death.[4] St. John declares that death is the judgment which one escapes who has come to believe on Christ;[5] that unless one has such close union with Christ as is symbolically expressed by eating His flesh and drinking His blood, he has not life;[6] that those who do not abide in Christ are thrown out, like branches, and wither, and are gathered and cast into the fire and burned.[7] It is some only who will at-

[1] Rom. vi. 23.
[2] Jas. i. 15.
[3] Rom. v. 21.
[4] Ibid. vi. 21.
[5] St. John v. 24.
[6] Ibid. vi. 53.
[7] Ibid. xv. 6.

tain eternal life — those who have been "given" to Christ.[1] He who loves his life, that is, merely natural, unspiritual existence, will not retain it forever even in undesirable conditions, but will lose it.[2] The author of the Second Epistle of St. Peter declares that the earth and all that is of its kind shall be burned up, and the new earth, which shall follow, shall belong to holy conversation, godliness, and righteousness.[3] And he says that the wicked who are reserved to the day of judgment to be punished, especially those who are sensual, are like beasts, without reason, physical creatures, made for capture and destruction, and they shall be utterly destroyed in their destruction, receiving the reward of their unrighteousness.[4] Words could hardly be stronger and clearer.

Throughout this whole line of thought there is no hint that "death" means endless life in misery, no hint that it means anything but death, the cessation of existence. Christ's great gift to men is life, joyous existence with amplitude

[1] St. John xvii. 2.
[2] Ibid. xii. 25.
[3] 2 Pet. iii. 10–14.
[4] Ibid. ii. 9–13.

of expanded powers. What could be its opposite but diminution of personality, tending to extinction? This seems essential to the just exegesis of such passages as those mentioned, and to the best understanding of the nature and work of Christ.

On the other hand, there are undoubtedly passages in the New Testament which assert or imply that the wicked continue to live forever in consciousness and in pain. The First Evangelist closes the parable of the Last Judgment with the declaration, "These [*i. e.* those on the left hand of the Judge] shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." [1] And he declares [2] that it is better to enter halt or maimed into life than with all one's members to be cast into eternal fire.[3] In the great and impassable gulf, which,

[1] St. Matt. xxv. 46. [2] Ibid. xviii. 8.

[3] The adjective here used, *αἰώνιος*, has been stretched on the rack of translation to make it fit the needs of the most opposite exegesis. Thus one expositor declares: "The terms which are translated 'everlasting,' 'eternal,' . . . are just as direct and simple in the Greek as in the English language. They signify precisely the same thing, and are used in precisely the same way." (SAMUEL C.

according to the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus,[1] is fixed between those who are in Abraham's Bosom and those in Hades, it is implied that the conditions of the two are permanent. Jude likens evil-doers to "wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever";[2] though this may apply to negation of existence as well as to its continuity. In the Book of the Revelation, it is

BARTLETT, D.D.: "Life and Death Eternal," p. 309.) Another says the phrase (*εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*) "uniformly denotes not duration without end, but permanent duration, permanent according to the nature of the subject." (JAMES M. WHITON, Ph.D.: "Is Eternal Punishment Endless?" p. 16.) The late Frederick W. Maurice held ("Theological Essays," p. 335 ff.) that the word *αἰώνιος*, "eternal," has a meaning primarily not quantitative but qualitative; that it does not refer to duration so much as to kind of existence; to that which is spiritual, in opposition to that which is sensual or natural. In this Maurice undoubtedly did good service, through calling attention to the fact that continuity depends upon quality, that that which is everlasting must be eternal. But I cannot divest myself of the conviction that where this word and its cognate expressions are used in the New Testament in connection with the punishment of the wicked, the writers had in view endless duration, however differently they may have used the expressions on other occasions.

[1] St. Luke xvi. 19 f. [2] Jude 13.

said that those who worship the Beast are "tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever, and they have no intermission day nor night." [1] And again it is said that "the devil was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the Beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." [2]

Whether these passages from the Apocalypse give a statement of the events which will attend the end of the world, or whether the authors of the other passages were speaking in dogmatic or in literary language, is not at present under consideration. Their language seems justly to admit the conclusion that some of the writers of the New Testament held that there were classes of beings opposed to God who would continue to exist forever in retributive pain. Such a position we should expect to find among the earliest Christian writers, for it was but the survival of the opinion of current

[1] Rev. xiv. 10, 11. [2] Ibid. xx. 10.

Jewish theology on this point. Sheol was thought of as a place of pain, physical and spiritual.[1] The author of the book of Judith says: "Woe to the nations that rise up against my kindred! The Lord Almighty will take vengeance of them in the day of Judgment, in putting fire and worms in their flesh, and they shall feel them and weep for ever." [2] In another description of Sheol it is said of the wicked that "here their spirits are placed apart in this great pain till the great day of judgment and punishment and torment of the accursed forever and vengeance for their spirits; there will they be bound forever." [3] And again it is said that "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall arise, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." [4]

Summing up then the opinions of the writers of the Bible on this point, we may call attention first of all to the fact that there is among them no unanimity of opinion; that opinions dia-

[1] Job xiv. 22.
[2] Judith xvi. 17.
[3] Eth. Enoch xxii. 11.
[4] Dan. xii. 2.

metrically opposed to one another are held by different writers. Secondly, belief in a life after this is held by the great majority; though a minority, in pre-Christian times, hold to annihilation at death. As to the duration of life after death the great majority of the New Testament writers maintain that permanence of existence may be secured by union with Christ, and that the lack of this union involves the cessation of existence. A small minority hold that those who are not with Christ live forever in torment. It must be pointed out, however, in regard to the latter opinion that it is nowhere made as a scientific statement nor claimed as divinely revealed, but that the language used was that of the apocalyptic poetry of the national literature and was universally regarded as symbolic rather than exact.

# Objections to the Idea of Immortality as an Acquisition

## VIII

# Objections to the Idea of Immortality as an Acquisition

THE view that permanent existence is not a natural endowment of every soul but may be acquired, has been called conditional immortality. And to this the objection has been made that it is not democratic; that it implies favoritism in the creation of a superior class and the exclusion of others. This objection, even if well founded, might perhaps not be final, since there are many facts of the universe which do not seem adjusted to a democratic plan; like inequality, expressed in the doctrine of election, depravity or man's lack of a stable equilibrium, the remorselessness of Nature or her disregard of human worth and desire. If, therefore, the view of immortality we have been describing were found to be as selective and special as

these, it would not be necessarily condemned thereby as out of accord with the tone of the universe. Nevertheless, an appeal may justly be taken from the kingdom of the world to the kingdom of God, from things as they are to things as they should be. And so we rightly put to any messenger claiming ultimate authority the test-question, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" When we approach our theory with this challenge, it at once replies that it is essentially democratic, adjusted, that is, not only to individuals but to the individual. Indeed, it is the only theory of immortality which is democratic, for it puts immortality within the reach of every man and gives every man a vote. It abolishes all classes but one, and places entrance to that within the power of every human being. Unlike the theory of natural immortality, it does not condemn every man to perpetual existence regardless of his desires, but gives him exactly what he wishes. It is not the result of circumstance, except so far as character is everywhere affected by circumstance, but it puts every one's destiny

into his own hands. For it is not absolute attainment which is its test but relative attainment, not the number of pieces the man has but how he plays the game. It is not necessarily the professing Christian with his church-going and his creed, who has a ticket to immortal life. It is not necessarily the street-Arab, the thief, the failure, who is excluded from it. Jesus asserted indeed that there were more of the latter class going into the kingdom of heaven in His day than of the former. But the test is one of inward attitude. Does the man welcome or oppose that which to him is the representative of the Most High? What is his attitude towards his own sense of oughtness? Does he find the welfare of others necessary to his own? These are different aspects of the first step towards union with the universal, aspects of the germ of eternal life. In how many persons this exists, we cannot say. In how many different, how many unlikely forms it exists, we are continually discovering with joy and surprise. The wonder at finding it among the unlikely and not finding it among the

likely has always stirred the discerning mind. "There are first that shall be last, and last that shall be first." The test is not absolute — a given *quantum* of attainment — but relative — a given quality in the attainer. Or, contrariwise, it is not relative but absolute; not what one man or any number may vote as proper, but the attainment of just one thing — a right attitude towards what is representative of God. What can be so democratic as a free country, where every man may do as he pleases? Does he want love, truth, righteousness, the food which makes personality? He shall have it forever and ever. Does he want sensual pleasures, indolence, self-absorption, with their inevitable consequence — the diminution of personality? He shall have them to the full, though their fullness necessarily involves his emptiness. Of course he may not will the cause and reject the effect; for no man's pleasure may a minus become a plus. The law of harvest is the most democratic of laws: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Every man's destiny will be exactly what he desires. The

man who is pursuing the downward course leading to extinction is not being dragged along against his permanent will. However he may regret and desire at times to change, the condition in which he is is in the long run the most comfortable to him. He may, if he will, at any moment change, not indeed his circumstances external or internal, but his attitude, and then he starts on the road to life. But in whichever direction his face is set, it is because his primary predominant choice is there. The man is as his will; and what more welcome arbiter of his destiny can he ask?

It may be objected that one's individual will is not his sole directive force, but that circumstances exert a controlling power which is in any case large. This recognition of a Divine election we may grant. Yet it affects the view of immortality we have been advocating no more than it does the doctrine of immortality as natural. Both must recognize the two factors of will and election. The reconciliation of them or of election with justice, is no more incumbent on the one theory than on the other.

Each may look upon it with awe, and turn to its own problem again. So too the charge against the former theory that according to it few attain eternal happiness, applies to the other theory as well; for the gate of entrance to such bliss is the same in both. Election and will — whether it is many or few that pass through these gate-posts, it is the same number whichever theory stands warder. It is only in regard to the condition of those outside that the theories differ. Do those continue to exist forever, either in torment or in misery; or do they gradually diminish in personality until they sink into extinction?

The theory of immortality as not inherent but to be attained is also unpopular because it seems to condition immortality on effort. It is more agreeable to the indolence of human nature to reject the idea of a superiority to be attained by exertion and to believe that its status is all that is necessary. To deprive humanity of a natural right to immortality would be, it is claimed, derogatory to its dignity. But, on the contrary, it is the ascription to hu-

manity of immortality by nature which is derogatory to its dignity. For then man's destiny, so far as it is concerned with this, would be determined for him from without. Now that which has its destiny determined from without itself, is a thing; and so far as man is not under his own control he is on the level of things, and therefore lacking in proper human dignity. If he must live forever whether he will or not, he is a thing-like creature. If he is in part an originating centre of his own existence, he shares the dignity of God. Jesus strongly emphasized effort as the condition of entrance into permanence of life, while at the same time he announced destruction, not continued existence, as the penalty of failure. "Lord," said a curious questioner, "are there few that be saved?" "Strive," he replied, "agonize, to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth

unto life, and few there be that find it."[1] He dwells upon immortality as a possibility. It is something to be achieved, which some may fail to attain. What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, but lose this persisting life![2] Win your souls through endurance.[3] The enterprise is like a voyage of adventure, which a man undertakes, seeking for a great prize and in which he stakes everything on finding it.[4] In short, man is not necessarily immortal but he may become so; or, in the language of a modern writer, though not immortal, he is immortable.[5]

Another objection to this view, that immortality is synonymous with spiritual life, is that the former belongs, it is held, to the next world, while as a fact the latter exists and is visible in this. We can have here, it is supposed, no further hold on immortality than to make ready for it; the thing itself will come by and

[1] St. Luke xiii. 23, 24; St. Matt. vii. 13, 14.
[2] St. Mark viii. 36. [3] St. Luke xxi. 19.
[4] St. Matt. xiii. 44–47.
[5] Samuel D. McConnell, D.D.: "The Evolution of Immortality," pp. 59, 75.

by. Yet on the theory we have been advocating, immortality is actually present and verifiable here and now. For we know spiritual life. We see it looking at us in the face of many a noble man, many a sweet woman, many a trustful little child. We see it and are glad; for it is often all the light of all our day. And while we are ready to make a stretch of belief and believe that this is a possible avenue leading towards immortality, we stop mystified when told that this constitutes immortality. We see too that spiritual life may come to an end through inward decay, while immortality seems by its nature to imply indestructibility. Yet the paradox becomes plain when we note that while that which is immortal cannot be destroyed by anything outside itself, it may be destroyed from within. Personality may be, wholly or in part, soaked with eternal life so that it will go on living forever. But it may so relax its hold upon the eternal element as to be diminished, and if the process of diminution continues, it must finally become extinct. There is nothing in the nature of the case to

confine this possibility of deterioration to this life. One is, it is true, less likely to deviate from a given course the longer he continues in it; and through the operation of this law character tends to become so fixed as to attain permanence. But the permanence is always held fast not by an outward necessity but by an inward grasp. To the saint tried and ripe, reversal of direction is, so to speak, physically possible though morally impossible. It was no mechanical necessity that made Jesus what He was, but it was because He submitted Himself and became obedient that God highly exalted Him.[1] An angel in heaven might revolt and go to hell; and if a sinner in hell exclaimed, "My Father, I repent!" he would be in heaven. Moral deterioration is therefore possible hereafter as truly as here; so that it does not follow because one lives after death that he will live forever; for survival of death is one thing, perpetuity of existence another. One's stock of immortality may not last. That is, life hereafter must conform to the same laws

[1] Phil. ii. 8, 9.

as here; reversal of direction becoming continually more unlikely but remaining ever possible as long as life persists.[1]

It may be objected that we have proclaimed the reign of law in the next life to be as here, and yet we see here no evidence that diminution of personality results in extinction. It might be a sufficient answer to point to the inevitable inference from the great law dominating the situation — that identification with the Divine life is the only way of preserving personality, or, to speak more accurately, of gaining it. For if participation in the life of God carries with

[1] "Für diejenigen, welche noch nicht in Christo abscheiden, bleibt in Hades zunächst noch die Möglichkeit offen, sich dem Heil der Erlösung zuzuwenden. Dazu finden sie dort neue Veranlassungen. In diesem Fall müssen sie dort den ganzen Heilsprocess durchmachen. Höchst langwierig und schmerzlich. Auch im besten Falle bleibt das Resultät noch sehr zurück hinter dem schon in diesem Leben Bekehrten. Aber auch hier in Hades kann das Individuum seine Bekehrung endbeharrlich verweigern. Dann geht es darauf aus, sich zu Dämonisiren und so das Leben nicht zu gewinnen. Dann ist eine Umkehr nicht mehr möglich. Letzlich ist aber das Erlöschen des Daseins auch der Dämonisirten ihr unabwendliches Geschick." — R. Rothe: "Dogmatik," Vol. III. sec. 131.

it continuity of existence, or rather constitutes existence, it follows that those who do not share the Divine life have no existence. But we do not need to trust the inference alone without confirmatory evidence. For we can see the process going on in certain departments of certain persons. One man has no artistic sense; that whole side of his nature is dead. Another has steadily abused his kindliness till it has become atrophied and left him cold, hard, cruel. We note the degeneration which takes place in a man who becomes indolent, incapable of thought, whimsical, sensual. Is the man as truly alive, as much of a personality, after these losses as before? Doubtless his body may be. But we have all along been recognizing that physical terms express manhood but partially. For its completer expression we need some of the great words which ring through literature and rouse men like battle-cries to their noblest action — such words as honor, heroism, truth, service, the right, the best. Do we call on such terms in describing the degenerate? One element after another of manly

character, or, to put it otherwise, of complete personality, disappears. We say the man is running down. Where would he run to if the process should complete itself? Take away one element of personality after another, and you must finally reach zero, extinction. The man at last goes out like a candle, because there are only candle-elements in him. Where this point is at which he becomes wholly material and therefore ceases to exist except as matter, we cannot say. We hope, our most reasonable hopes compel us to believe, that it is not in this life. We cannot but think there is a germ of goodness undestroyed in every man, a possibility of awakening some side of life that is real and spiritual, which in its turn shall bring its blessed fellows with it. We cannot but hope that in the different conditions of life hereafter many a man will see whose eyes here have never seen, will hear whose ears here have never heard. But we cannot but recognize also that there is nothing in the mere change of condition which will of itself necessitate this, but that growth in both directions, downward and

upward, must be possible, since growth is essential to life, and direction from within is essential to growth. Or as Lotze says: "That will last forever which on account of its excellence and its spirit must be an abiding part of the universe; what lacks that preserving worth will perish. . . . We have no other principle for deciding it [the question of the immortality of the soul] beyond this general idealistic conviction — that every created thing will continue if and so long as its continuance belongs to the meaning of the world; that everything will pass away which had its authorized place only in a transitory phase of the world's course." [1]

To sum up the two positions we have been considering, we may say that the one holds perpetuity of existence to be inherent in human nature; that no change after death is possible; and that consequently those who go out of this life not in harmony with God live in consciousness and torment forever. The other holds that perpetuity of existence is not inherent in human nature; that it may however be ac-

[1] Lotze: "Metaphysic," sec. 245, p. 432 (Eng. trans.).

quired by every one; that the vitalizing principle is that which is variously called spiritual life, belief in Christ, union with the universal; that the processes of life hereafter are the same as here; and that alienation from God produces diminution of personality, which like all decay, is largely unconscious, painless, and gradual, and results ultimately in extinction.[1]

[1] One of the most prominent exponents of this view, that immortality is not inherent in man by nature but that it is acquired only by spiritual union with God, is Dr. Hermann Schultz, of Göttingen. The following extracts from his "Voraussetzungen der Christliche Lehre von der Unsterblichkeit" (Göttingen, 1861), will serve to show his position:

"Unsterblichkeit und Unvergänglichkeit sind keine Natureigenschaften, die ein Wesen kraft seiner Schöpfung empfangen konnte; denn sie widersprechen dem Begriffe der Schöpfung als solchem [p. 9]. Gott ist allein Quelle des Lebens und trägt es allein in sich [p. 3]. Was aber nicht in sich die Quelle des Lebens hat, bleibt stets in seinem Sein bedingt durch Etwas ausser sich, ist also nicht in sich unsterblich, wenn es auch ewig dauern kann [p. 8]. Nicht also auf dem Gebiete der Schöpfung, nicht in der Naturverhältnissen können wir den Grund suchen, warum wir Unsterblichkeit hoffen [p. 55]. Der Zusammenhang mit Gott, welchen das Geschöpf als solches durch seine Schöpfung erhalt, nicht genügt, um es dieses Lebens theilhaftig zu machen. . . . so muss für die menschliche Natur, wenn sie doch unsterblich sein soll, ein andrer

# The Winning of Immortality

Sin means death; righteousness means life — this is the message written large from the first word of Genesis to the last word of the Revelation. There is no aspect of God more moving than His effort to seek and to save the

Zusammenhang mit Gott offen stehen, ein Zusammenhang, durch welchen sie wirklich des Lebens so theilhaftig wird, dass sie es als ihr eigen fühlen kann. Ein solcher Zusammenhang aber ist der Ethische [p. 56]. Er hat die ebenbildliche Persönlichkeit, hat die Kraft in sich, das Absolute zu erfassen das, was ihm nicht Natur anerschaffen wenden konnte, durch freien Willen in sich hinein zu ziehen, die Kraft, heilig und unsterblich zu werden [p. 68]. So liegt allerdings in der Persönlichkeit der Schlüssel zu der Unsterblichkeitsfrage [p. 69]. Wahre Persönlichkeit aber ist erst da, wo zu diesem Selstbewusstsein das Erfassen des Absoluten hinzukommt. Wo das Selbstbewusstsein sich selbst in Zusammenschlusse mit Gott erkennt, wo es den eignen Willen in Zusammenschlusse mit dem Willen Gottes, das Gefühl des eignen Persönlichkeit zusammengeschlossen hat mit der Liebe Gottes, da ist die creaturliche Persönlichkeit vollendet, da giebt sie zugleich die Bürgschaft der Unsterblichkeit. Denn wer sich in Zusammenschlusse mit Gott und doch als eigne Persönlichkeit erkannt hat, für den hört jede Gefahr auf, vernichtet zu werden [p. 70]. So sagen wir in Uebereinstimmung mit der Auffassung der Schrift (Gen. ii. 17; Röm. v. 12), dass der Tod nicht etwas Natürliches, mit der Schöpfung nothwendig Gesetzes war, — sondern dass er nur eintreten konnte, wo des Menschen durch die Schöpfung gesetztes Ziel vereitelt ward [p. 85]."

lost. And this outgoing of His is the same whether it is engaged in leading the rejoicing soul through all the mansions where He Himself dwells, or in quietly allowing to ebb gradually from him who has refused to be a soul that life he has persisted in throwing away. Both processes are the same; for the loving-kindness of God and the retributive justice of God are one.

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